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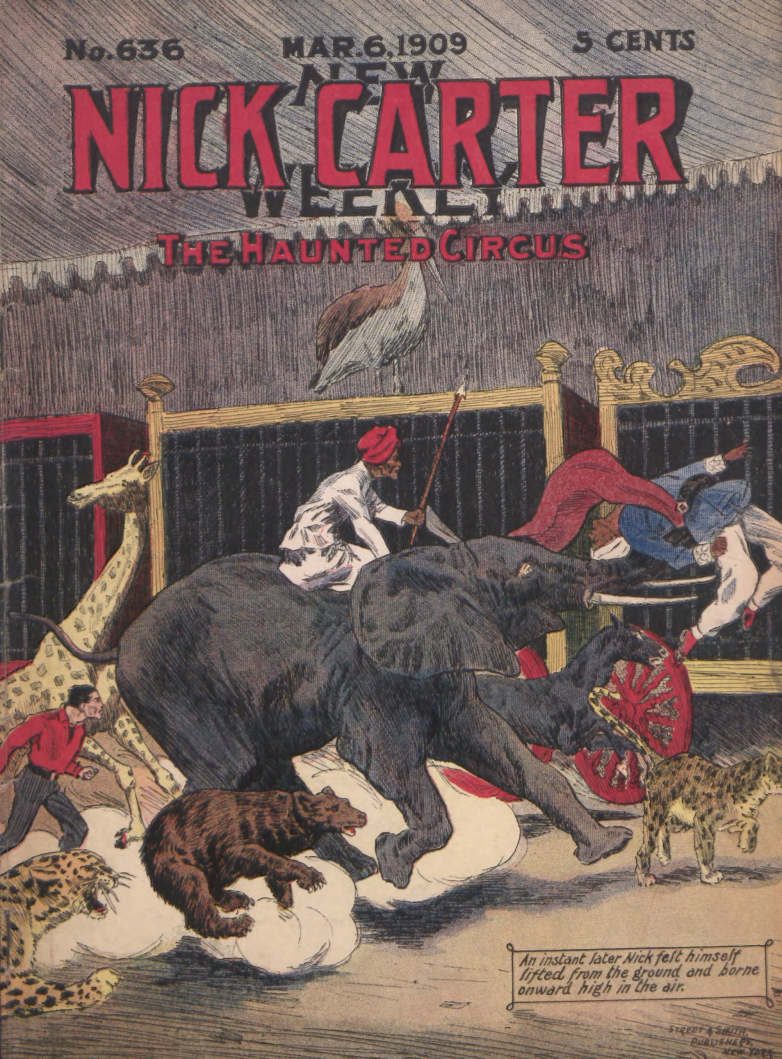
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE HAUNTED CIRCUS



An instant later Nick felt himself lifted from the ground and borne onward high in the air.

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NICK CARTER

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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The Haunted Circus;

OR,

NICK CARTER LAYS A GHOST.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE CIRCUS GHOST.

Adam Hindpaugh, proprietor and manager of the greatest circus on earth, rushed into the presence of Nick Carter like a whirlwind. Hindpaugh always did things after the whirlwind fashion, and now he apparently had more reason than usual for that quality of action.

Nick Carter had been awaiting him about a quarter of an hour in response to a message he had received from the circus man requesting his immediate attendance upon Hindpaugh on a matter of the utmost importance.

The time was Wednesday of the first week of the show in the City of New York, just one year later than the date of Nick Carter's remarkable experience with Prince, the tiger, James Dumont, the tiger-tamer, and Millie Slade, "the world's most wonderful and accomplished equestrienne and pistol-shot."*

The reader who has perused the two preceding numbers of the *Nick Carter Weekly* will recall the assassination of James Dumont, the tiger-tamer, the presentation of Prince, the tiger, to Nick Carter, and finally the remarkable scene in the center ring of the circus at the Garden in New York which resulted so tragically in the death of Millie Slade from heart disease.

*See NICK CARTER WEEKLY, No. 635.

As has already been intimated, one entire year had elapsed since those stirring incidents had happened in the career of Nick Carter and had astonished all New York for the time being.

After the death of Millie Slade, who was masquerading as Madam Maritza, the circus and menagerie had gone ahead on its tour of the country, and the remarkable things that had happened to it in its performances while in the City of New York were temporarily forgotten.

Nick Carter, in the press of other business, had followed his inevitable rule of dismissing from his mind all closed incidents, and it was not, therefore, until he received the summary and emphatic request from Adam Hindpaugh to call upon that gentleman at his private office at the Garden that the detective recalled to his mind everything that had gone before in connection with "Hindpaugh's aggregation of world-wide wonders."

The message came to the detective about the middle of the forenoon, and he lost no time in hastening to the Garden to grant Hindpaugh the requested interview.

Arrived there, he was told that the proprietor had stepped outside for a few moments, but would soon return; and therefore he had waited as we have seen, and with the result already explained.

Adam Hindpaugh was, at that time, a large and rather florid man who possessed wonderful exuberance

of spirit and whose source of reserve energy seemed to be inexhaustible.

As he dashed into the room upon Nick Carter, his face was redder than usual—almost as red as his hair, in fact, and he held, as was his inevitable custom, a huge cigar in the right-hand corner of his mouth; a cigar which was never lighted and was never intended to be lighted, and which he gradually consumed with his teeth instead of with fire.

"Gee, Carter!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with the detective as if the latter's arm were a pump-handle, "I sure am glad to see you. I'd have sent for you a month ago while we were rehearsing and getting things into shape for the season, only for the fact that I thought that maybe the funny business would come to a stop when we struck the road; but bless your heart, Carter, nothing of the sort. It has kept right up, growing worse and worse every day, until now I'll give it to you straight, it's got to be almost unbearable."

"What has?" asked the detective, finding a chance to put in his question when the circus man stopped for breath, and also to bite off another half-inch of his Havana cigar.

"The ghost," replied Hindpaugh, thrusting his hands deeply into his trousers pockets, settling himself solidly upon his heels, protruding his chin and gazing fiercely into the detective's eyes, as if in defiance of the latter's possible unbelief.

Nick Carter smiled indulgently.

"Yes?" he inquired. "What ghost? Whose ghost?"

The circus man sent a huge chair spinning half-way across the room with a vicious swing of one of his legs, and then threw himself upon it, mopping his bald head with one hand while he fanned himself vigorously with a newspaper that he held in the other one.

"Millie's," he replied laconically, now relinquishing the gaze he had fixed upon the detective and bending it studiously upon the tips of his toes.

"Millie's ghost?" asked the detective, smiling. "Do you mean Millie Slade?"

"I sure do."

"Millie Slade is dead, isn't she?"

"Dead!" exclaimed the circus man vociferously. "Of course she's dead! Deader than a door-nail, or a whole bunch of them! If she weren't dead how the—how the dickens could her ghost be raising particular Cain, among my performers? Carter, I want you to 'lay' that ghost. I don't care a picayune how you do it, or what it costs. Money ain't no object, but that ghost has got to be laid or I've got to give up the show business. I've heard that you're a dandy good detective, and I've got reason to know it, but what your abilities may be in the ghost-laying line hasn't materialized on my horizon yet. However, there's your job all cut out for you, and now it's up to you. You do the business and do it up brown, and then send in your bill, and I'll give you my word that I won't look at anything on the account but the bottom figures."

"That is all very generous of you, Mr. Hindpaugh," said the detective, smiling more broadly than ever, "and it ought to be a sinecure, since ghosts do not really exist."

"This one does. You can bet your life on that."

"Oh, no, it doesn't, Adam; somebody is playing pranks on you."

"Pranks be blowed! I thought that myself, first off, but I tell you this thing has got my performers stirred up until every last one of them is ready to leave. It's something that ain't made of flesh and blood, and something that doesn't do things the way human beings do them."

"Tell me about it."

"Gee, Carter, I wish I could."

"Well, why did you send for me to come here if you can't tell me about it?"

"Oh, I'm going to tell you about it, all right; that is, I'm going to tell you all I know about it, which you'll find out is very little when all is said."

"Well, go ahead then; I'm waiting and listening."

"I suppose you'd like to have me start at the beginning, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, certainly."

"All right; carry your mind back to a year ago; to the time when we had that disastrous week here in New York which began with the murder of Jim Dumont, the tiger-tamer, and which ended with that wild scene in the arena in which you took such a prominent part."*

"That is not difficult, Adam."

"Well, we completed our engagement here, as you know, pretty much to the good; and we finished out the season all right, too; so far as that's concerned; and there wasn't the slightest bit of trouble from that time on to the close of the season except, of course, that I missed my two greatest stars more than I can describe to you, and I probably lost a lost of money because of their deaths."

"Get down to the ghost, Adam."

"I'm coming to the ghost, all right; don't you hurry me. I take it that you want this thing in chronological form, and that's about the way you're going to get it."

"All right," said the detective, laughing aloud this time.

"What I want to do, Carter, is to tell you this thing from A to Z; and after that I want to wash my hands of the whole business, bar nothing, and leave it up to you."

The circus man started from his chair and, reaching forward, pounded the table with his fist as he added with deep emphasis and with fiercely glowing eyes:

"I'll tell you right now, Carter, Johnny-on-the-spot, that from this out I'm going to have nothing more to do with the ghost business. The ghost is discharged, and the first galoot, man or woman, that mentions ghost to me again, in business hours or out of them, gets fired, too. I've engaged you as ghost-doctor for this outfit and I'm going to give out a general announcement that all ghost complaints must hereafter be

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*See NICK CARTER WEEKLY, Nos. 634, 635.

referred to you. And, what's more, Carter, I don't want to hear any ghost-talk from you, either."

"I don't think there's any danger of that, Adam," was the quiet reply.

"There mustn't be! There sha'n't be! I'm sick of the whole confounded business! For the last twelve weeks it's been ghost here and ghost there and everywhere until I'm almost a ghost myself."

"You don't look it," smiled the detective.

"Well, whether I look it or not, it's true. I tell you, Carter, that you've no idea what it means to have a ghost walking around among your performers, and your tent-men, and your drivers, and your cooks, and every blooming employee you've got, raising the very dickens with them, scaring them plumb out of their wits, driving a few of them bughouse, others to drink; scaring the animals so that they get off their feed and won't perform, and raising Ned with the whole show outfit. You don't know what it means! you can't know unless you, yourself, have been proprietor of the greatest show on earth, and have got about fifteen hundred men and women who almost call you papa and who go to running to you for everything that happens, from a corn on their little toe, to stock-jobbing in Wall Street. Why, Carter, a ghost—a real, genuine, dyed-in-the-wool, authenticated ghost, can raise more different kinds of trouble in an outfit of this kind, than the smallpox or the bubonic plague."

"I think," replied the detective quietly, "that I can appreciate some of the difficulties you mention; but before you go on with your story, Hindpaugh, we must start on the proposition that there is no such thing as a ghost."

The circus man shrugged his shoulders, spat out the remainder of his cigar, and substituted a new one in its place, stretched his legs anew to their full length and replied:

"It doesn't make any sort of difference, Carter, what you call it. Ghost is the name of it, as the thing is generally recognized in this show of mine, and ghost it is; at least, so far as my performers, my employees, and my horses and wild animals are concerned. Ghost it is, so far as the 'laying' of it goes."

"All right, Hindpaugh, I'll take the job; but I think it's most time that you began your story."

CHAPTER II.

THE STORY OF THE GHOST.

Hindpaugh, in truly reminiscent manner and with the air of one who was relating a matter of entirely impersonal interest, thrust his hands still more deeply into his pockets, stretched his legs a fraction of an inch farther, and, with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling and all the while constantly transferring the fireless cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other and back again, began:

"I won't try to tell you, Carter, how long this sort of thing has been going on before I was told about it, for that doesn't directly concern us. It is sufficient to say that by the time my people came to me about the matter, his ghostship was pretty well established as an undesirable member of my troupe."

"*His* ghostship!" exclaimed the detective, smiling. "*Her* ghostship I should have said, of course; but then it is natural to speak of a ghost in a masculine sense."

"I suppose so; go on."

"Well, the first thing that was noticed was an uneasiness among the animals, which always occurred at about the same hour every night."

"Wait a moment," said Nick. "That was while you were in winter quarters, I presume?"

"Yes."

"You needn't particularize about the happenings of that time," said the detective, "because inasmuch as you have now left your winter quarters for the season and will not return to them until the close of it, I am not particularly interested in that part of the occurrences."

"Well," said Hindpaugh, "the fact remains that for weeks before it was time for us to take to the road the animals were disturbed night after night at about the same hour. Their keepers, and by that term I mean all of the men who have charge of the various animals during that period, were completely at a loss to account for those disturbances.

"Every night shortly after one o'clock the tigers began an uproar which was gradually taken up, little by little, by all the other animals in the menagerie, until it became almost a pandemonium, and it required the united efforts of all the men to calm them.

"These men tried in every way to account for those disturbances, but without avail, until at last one of them, who had formerly acted as an assistant to Jim Dumont, the tiger-tamer, happened to remember that it had been almost the invariable custom of Millie Slade to return to her quarters at about that hour each night when she was alive.

"Without saying anything to his companions about what he intended to do he fixed himself a blanket near the cages where the tigers were kept, and waited one night to discover, if possible, what it was that disturbed them.

"His story, as I have since heard it, was to the effect that he was roused from his slumber by the uneasy movements of the animals near him, and, half-starting to his feet, he saw the figure of a woman apparently materialize before his eyes and glide rather than walk across the space between the outer door and the tigers' cage.

"There was, of course, no light save that which penetrated a large skylight in the roof of the place, but as there was a moon shining at the time, it afforded sufficient illumination for him to see quite plainly, so he stated, even had it not been for other conditions which rendered the figure of the woman distinctly prominent. She seemed to be entirely enveloped in some sort of

illumination which appeared to proceed from her own person."

"Phosphorescence," said Nick.

The circus man nodded, but he did not change his attitude or withdraw his eyes from the ceiling.

"Yes," he agreed. "I thought of that, and to me it seemed a very reasonable explanation of the phenomenon; but you see, Carter, after all, it didn't hold water—at least it doesn't seem to have held any."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that Phillips, which is the name of the man I am talking about, jumped forward as soon as he saw the figure of the woman, and tried to seize her."

"You mean," said Nick, smiling, "that Phillips *says* that is what he did."

"Look here, Carter, I'm telling you this tale just as it was given to me. I'm not vouching for the truth of anything that came to me second-handed. Presently I'll get down to my own personal experiences, and what I tell you then, I'll swear to."

"All right," said the detective; "go on."

"Well, Phillips made a bluff at catching the thing, or at least he said he did, and he swears by the beards of all his great grandfathers that he walked plumb through the apparition, fire, and sulfur fumes, and all, and came out on the other side, and never touched it."

The detective only shrugged his shoulders at this; he made no comment.

"The tigers set up a howl at the same moment, and it was taken up by the other animals as it had always been before: the other keepers rushed in upon the scene and they found—what do you think they found, Carter?"

"I give it up, Adam."

"They found Phillips in a dead faint in the middle of the place, and it took two full buckets of water to pull him out of it."

"That was when he told the story of trying to grasp the apparition, I suppose?"

"Sure thing. You see, the horror of it all, when he tried to catch the ghost and couldn't, knocked him silly, and he collapsed."

"Well, what more?"

"Phillips remained with us about two weeks longer, after which he quit my outfit and the show business entirely. He's janitor for a flat-house up-town in New York now."

"Are there many more stories of the kind that agree with his?" asked Nick.

"Dozens of them, Carter. I have told you Phillips' story only because it comprehends nearly all of them. Phillips was only one of the many who saw the ghost and who had about the same experience with it."

"But, I'm to understand, am I not, that at the time you were not told about it?"

"No; I wasn't told until long afterward, and that is where the trouble really began. If I had been informed in the beginning, I would have kept the news of the affair from spreading among the others; but as it turned out I was the very last one in the outfit who received any information at all, and by the time I was told, my people were so generally frightened out of their wits that I couldn't do anything to control them.

"You see, Carter, it was like this: After the experience that Phillips and the others had with the ghost in the animal-house, the ghost was no longer satisfied with doing so little. It began to appear in the sleeping-rooms of different members of the troupe. One woman would wake up with a scream and declare afterward she had felt a cold and clammy hand passed across her face; another would let out a yell in the middle of the night and it would be found that she had been pulled bodily out of her bed, by the sheet being jerked from under her; others on returning to their quarters would discover the outlines of the ghost flitting about mysteriously; and when I got back from Holland where I had gone to purchase a few more animals of the Hagenbeck people, I found the very deuce to pay.

"Of course I pooh-poohed the whole business. I told the entire bunch of them that if I heard any more about the ghost the person who mentioned it to me would be discharged forthwith.

"But, bless you, Carter, that didn't make any difference at all! It is true that for a time I heard nothing about it; but I knew that they were discussing the matter among themselves, and the result of it was that just before it was time for us to leave our quarters and start on the road, the whole blooming outfit came to me in a body and swore that they would quit me entirely unless something was done to stop the disturbances."

"Well, what did you say?"

"Why, I gave them the worst calling-down and jacking-up that you ever heard of. I told them that they were a parcel of fools to give any credence whatever to the existence of a ghost; I assured them that it was only some fool-performer in the company who was playing jokes on them, and I offered a prize of a thousand dollars to be paid in cash to the person who would succeed in finding out who it was."

"Did that offer bring about any results?"

"Not a sign of one, Carter."

"What did you do then?"

"I didn't do anything at all except to assure them that our winter quarters afforded especial facilities for such jokes as I have described, and that as soon as we got on the road the ghost would have to give up business because there would be no opportunity left for carrying it on."

"Well?"

"Carter, I was never more mistaken in my life."

"You mean, I suppose, that the ghost continued business at the old stand?"

"You bet your life!"

"And that was how long ago?"

"We gave our first show a week ago last Monday afternoon."

"And the ghost has been busy ever since?"

"Busy! Well, I should say so."

"You intimated a moment ago that you had seen the ghost yourself."

"I sure have."

"And do you, Adam Hindpaugh, believe that you have seen a ghost?"

"Look here, Carter, I'm not a blooming jackass—at least, I don't think I am."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I don't believe in ghosts any more than you do. I didn't believe in them until I saw this thing that calls itself a ghost, and I don't believe in them now that I have seen it; but, all the same, a lot of mighty queer things have happened and are happening which I can't explain and which I have given up trying to explain."

"Tell me about it."

"Millie Slade has been dead almost a year, and, barring a few weeks, has been in her grave that long, but I'll tell you right now, Nick Carter, that no longer ago than last night I personally saw Millie Slade just as plainly and distinctly as I ever saw her in life; and you can put it down in black and white that I'm telling you no lie when I say it."

"Where were you when you saw this thing?"

"I was in the room in this Garden which Millie Slade used for a dressing-room when she was a member of this outfit."

"How did you happen to be there?"

"How the dickens would I be there? I was waiting for the ghost."

"Oh, you were on watch, were you?"

"I was."

"And you were expecting the ghost?"

"I was."

"And it must follow, therefore, that the ghost of Millie Slade knew that she was expected."

"I suppose so, if ghosts have knowledge of goings on."

"Why did you select her old dressing-room for the place to keep watch?"

"Because I had been told that it was the most likely place for her to appear."

"Was last night the only time that you have seen this apparition?"

"No, it wasn't; but I'm telling you about it as being the most recent appearance, and, therefore, the most interesting, and the freshest one in my memory."

"Well, then, suppose you relate your experience of last night, beginning at the time when you determined to wait in that room for the appearance of a ghost."

"That's what I started in to do."

"Was the ghost dressed in white and enveloped in the phosphorescent flames, as you just now described its appearance when Phillips saw it?"

"No, it wasn't."

"How, then?"

The circus man leaned forward and with slow emphasis replied:

"That is the remarkable part of it, Carter."

"Why the remarkable part of it?"

"Because when I saw Millie Slade last night or the thing that represented itself as Millie Slade, whether it was ghost or woman, she was dressed exactly as she was at the time of her death in the circus ring inside this building; and do you remember how that was, Carter?"

"Yes," said Nick.

"Then," continued Adam Hindpaugh, "you'll recall the fact that she was appearing at that time in disguise, and had represented herself to be Madam Maritza and not Millie Slade."

"I remember."

"Good, well, that's how the ghost looked when I saw it last night."

CHAPTER III.

NICK CARTER PLANS A THRILLER.

It is always more or less interesting to describe as graphically as possible in words the doings of a supposed ghost, but since modern incredulity positively refuses to accept anything of the kind, we will not worry the reader with the details of Adam Hindpaugh's recital.

Taken by itself and removed from Nick Carter's participation in the affair, the story of the ghost and of what it did to frighten the men, women, and animals of Hindpaugh's greatest show in the world would fill two or three numbers of these Nick Carter's histories.

It became evident to the detective while he listened to Hindpaugh's story that there was no doubt at all that some person or persons, revengefully disposed, or possibly in the effort to carry out a master joke, must be having unlimited fun with the show people.

That particular night as described by Hindpaugh had pretty nearly done for the proprietor of the circus himself.

He had waited in the room where Millie Slade formerly dressed; and, as people invariably do in such cases, had ultimately fallen asleep.

If the reader will stop to consider for a moment, he will readily determine that there can be no occasion when drowsiness so readily overpowers a person as when waiting in concentrated suspense for the appearance of some particular thing, or for the happening of some specified event.

Such a person ultimately becomes in a manner self-hypnotized; drowsiness and sleep are the natural consequences of that condition.

To a consummate actor awaiting an opportunity to perpetrate a scene such as this one was, the most acceptable moment for acting it arrives when the victim has fallen asleep.

Slumber so induced is always heavy at the beginning of it. The wits of a person thus overcome are, to use a common phrase, wool-gathering and not easily roused to mental activity.

Thus it was that Hindpaugh described himself to

Nick as being startled wide-awake by feeling a cold and clammy hand slapped suddenly against his face.

He expressed himself as having leaped to his feet more greatly startled than he would have believed possible; and as having discovered the figure of Millie Slade arrayed in the costume and dress of Madam Maritza, facing him from the opposite side of the room.

Hindpaugh tried to be literally correct in his description of the scene, but he confessed to the detective that he was not entirely master of himself at the moment and not wholly cognizant of what he did or did not do.

He said that he started forward at a jump toward the apparition; that it raised one hand in a repellent gesture, and that he was forced to come to a pause in the middle of the room despite his desire to advance; that the condition in which he seemed to be held, half-paralyzed, lasted for a moment only, and that then when he rushed forward a second time the apparition backed out of his sight and seemed to fade into nothingness before his eyes.

He swore that there was no curtain near that spot behind which a woman could have concealed herself, and that there was no door within ten feet of where the ghost disappeared.

The result of it was that Hindpaugh found himself standing in the middle of the room, entirely alone, and with no means of explaining, more than these preceding paragraphs have done, what had happened.

Nick Carter tried to pin him down to a confession that his experiences might have been the result of a dream, and consequently that it was all due to his imagination, fired somewhat by his fears and superinduced by the circumstances surrounding him at the time.

All this Hindpaugh emphatically denied.

He stoutly asserted that he was entirely in possession of his senses when he was roused from sleep by the blow from the moist hand, and that he was prepared to swear before any tribunal in the world to the correctness of what he had related.

And this was not the only time when like experiences had been met with by Hindpaugh himself.

They were all more or less of the same character; invariably when he saw the ghost it was immediately after being aroused from sleep, as already described, and in much the same manner.

These experiences had come to him in other places than the dressing-rooms described, but he had told that to nobody at all until the occasion of this interview with the detective.

Always he had stoutly asserted to the members of his troupe that he had never seen the ghost, and even now, although they knew that he had waited in the dressing-room for its appearance, he denied to them that he had seen it.

"I am an intensely practical man, Carter," he said in one of his statements, "and I am not predisposed to any sort of belief in the supernatural. I suppose that many of the superstitions that go hand in hand with a showman's life, are mine, are engraved on my tough hide, but belief in ghosts is no part of them. Personally I am no more afraid of that ghost than I am of you. Its appearance is uncanny and startling, but reason overcomes any such fright, almost at once. I am not concerned about my personal safety at all; the thing that interests me is the number of dollars and cents involved, for unless that ghost is laid, this season is bound to be a failure."

For the rest of his story he described in as graphic detail as he could the experiences of the others connected with his show.

Boiled down to a few sentences, the ghost of Millie Slade had been seen by nearly every member of the company on many separate occasions and in widely different places.

The animal-keeper who had succeeded Phillips swore positively that the spirit of Millie Slade entered the tigers' cage every night at half-past one, and that he had seen it there repeatedly inside the bars when there was no possible way for a human being to get in or out of the cage.

All the company agreed that about half-past one o'clock night after night the tigers roared and the other animals howled.

Down where the horses were stabled the stories were practically the same. The Arabian steeds formerly used by Millie Slade in her wonderful equestrian performances, had many times begun plunging and rearing at about that hour of the night, and were later found to be trembling and sweating with terror.

The groom who had charge of them made oath to Nick Carter that he had been roused from his sleep on two separate occasions to see the white-clad figure of Millie Slade glide past him toward the stall of her favorite horse, Selim; that he had seen this apparition leap to the back of the horse, which crouched almost to its belly in terror and which acted almost human in its fright.

Moumahd, the elephant-keeper, who, because of his nativity and religious training, believed as thoroughly in spirits as in the material, related with entire calmness many occasions when he had seen the ghost of Millie flitting about among his charges.

He told with graphic detail how he had time after time watched the doings of the ghost, but had made no effort to approach it or interfere with it, since he knew positively that it was a ghost and would do him no harm. His stories differed from all the others in the strong point that at no time when he had seen the apparition had he felt anything approaching fear; *and neither, apparently, had the animals under his charge.*

Nick did not know, or, at least, he had never heard, that elephants alone among four-footed animals are exempt from fear of the supernatural. The story of Moumahd, therefore, interested him more particularly than did the many others he heard. Moumahd accepted the whole affair and each occurrence of it with

the utter calm of the Brahman; and almost with too great degree of calm, the detective thought.

These different experiences are given here in the abstract for the purpose of establishing in the mind of the reader a thorough understanding of the condition that existed at the time Nick Carter took charge of this case.

A panic of terror had seized upon every person connected with the show, from the manager down to the hostler and tent-men, with the sole exception of Moumahd; and it had imparted itself to the animals, from the tigers down to the monkeys, with the sole exception of Moumahd's charges, the elephants.

These latter had never been known to trumpet or to exhibit that unreasoning terror for which elephants are proverbial, and in this fact, Nick Carter felt, existed the beginning of the explanation of the mystery.

Nick determined to observe Moumahd closely.

The detective occupied the balance of that day of the interview with Hindpaugh in passing around among the performers and the corps of employees, using his intelligent methods of picking up detailed information, without giving the idea to those he questioned that he was seeking it. He talked with the animal-keepers and trainers, with the hostlers and the equestrian performers, with the jugglers, tumblers, trapeze performers, and, in fact, everybody connected with the show; and by the close of that evening's performance believed that he had posted himself thoroughly regarding the condition of mind under which they were all laboring.

He satisfied himself that even a greater degree of panic existed than Hindpaugh realized; he convinced himself that the members of the troupe were actually on the point of leaving it *en masse*, with the possible exception of Moumahd, who was entirely undisturbed.

Just before the performance closed for the night the detective sought Hindpaugh and they went together to the latter's private office, where the interview had occurred earlier in the day.

"Well," said Hindpaugh, seating himself and offering the detective a cigar. "I suppose, Carter, that you have got the whole thing down fine by this time."

"No," said Nick, "I don't think I have."

"What have you discovered?"

"Merely this, Hindpaugh: That every person I have questioned not only upholds the stories you have told me, but goes a whole lot further in their recitals."

The showman nodded, and smiled grimly.

"I think, Adam," continued the detective, "your people are pretty well satisfied that there is a ghost among them."

"You bet your life they are!"

"And I quite agree with you that the ghost must be laid if you intend to finish out your season on the road."

"Sure thing."

"I have made up my mind that it will be entirely useless to attempt to convince your people by argument that the show is not haunted."

"That's right, too."

"And so the only thing that remains to be done is to resort to carefully laid plans to unveil this mystery."

"Right."

"I have determined upon such a plan."

"Good! I thought you would."

"In making my inquiries to-day and to-night I have been careful not to let it appear who or what I was."

"But there must be some people in this show who remember you."

"Oh, yes, many of them remembered me; but I succeeded in making them believe that I was here only because of my former interest in your show, and I pretended that I heard about the ghost for the first time when they told me their story."

"I see the point."

"I have been asked dozens of times to-day not only what I thought about it, but I have been requested to do what I could to explain the mysterious appearances."

"I expected that would be the case," said Hindpaugh, nodding.

"To each request made I replied that I was already engaged: and now, Hindpaugh, I will tell you what I wish to do."

"Very well, what is it?"

"I want you to announce in blazing headlines tomorrow that you have engaged the services of a hitherto unheard of tiger-tamer. You know better than I could suggest how to emblazon every bill-board in the city with the information."

"You bet I do!"

"Very well, then, I will be the new tiger-tamer. You may give me any name on the bill-boards you are pleased to select. The *Oceanic* is due to arrive at her dock about eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, and I want you, accompanied by some sort of an escort which will attract attention, to meet that steamer at the pier in order to welcome the advent of your newly-engaged tiger-tamer. Announce that fact, Hindpaugh, then go to the steamer to meet the man. *You will find him awaiting you there—and you must leave the rest to him.*"

CHAPTER IV.

HILARIO, THE TIGER-TAMER.

There was more than the usual throng at the North River pier to welcome the arrival of the huge ocean liner when she swung in at her pier shortly after eleven o'clock of the day following the conversation between Nick Carter and Adam Hindpaugh concerning the circus ghost.

This crowd was attracted doubtless by the unusual spectacle of the miniature circus parade which had also gone to the pier to meet the steamship.

All the way down through the city from the Garden to the place where the huge vessels docked, this procession had attracted unwonted attention, as Adam

Hindpaugh, acting under the suggestion of Nick Carter, had hoped it would do.

One of the smaller band-wagons was utilized for the accommodation of several of the musicians, and this was flanked on either side by outriders gaudily caparisoned, with four others in front and four more in the rear.

Behind these came a gilded cage, in which three tigers skilfully doped with anesthetics slumbered peacefully, and only by an occasional movement gave evidence that they were alive and conscious.

Still behind this gilded cage was drawn another one, to which six white horses had been harnessed, and this latter cage contained only one animal, which, if the public had been more observant, would perhaps have been recognized as that famous tiger, Prince, once the property of James Dumont, the tiger-tamer, who was murdered by Millie Slade; later the possession of Nick Carter, the detective, and still later, by courtesy, in the possession of the zoological gardens at the Bronx Park.

For this particular occasion, as arranged by Nick Carter in his talk with Adam Hindpaugh, Prince had been borrowed from the Park Commissioners; and it is needless to say that Prince, unlike the tigers in the cage ahead of him, had not been drugged.

Those of our readers who are familiar with the previous history of this royal Bengal tiger will remember that he was remarkable in his intelligence, strong in his affections, and had been made such a pet and companion by his former owners that he had become as docile and kind as a regular domestic animal.

On that particular morning, while he was drawn through the streets of New York City in his gilded cage, Prince exhibited every sign of content and pleasure, for the experience brought back to him unmistakably recollections of his former good times.

He seemed to enjoy the noise of the streets and the admiration of the crowds that gathered about him, and his yellow eyes blinked unceasingly, and with a mild and wondering enjoyment, into the human eyes they encountered on the way.

Just back of this cage an open carriage, drawn by four black horses, contained no less a personage than the proprietor of the circus and menagerie himself; our red-headed, red-faced friend, Adam Hindpaugh.

The journey from the Garden to the pier attracted many of the curious, who wondered what this miniature parade could mean, and when at last the cavalcade, if it may be called such, stopped at the pier, there were perhaps a thousand persons, boys and men mostly, gathered about it, who would not otherwise have been in that vicinity to welcome the arrival of the steamer.

Had these curious persons paused to read what was emblazoned upon the bill-boards of the city before they followed after the procession, they would have discovered the conspicuous announcement posted in many places which read:

"HILARIO, THE TIGER-TAMER.

"FIRST APPEARANCE IN THE UNITED STATES OF THE MOST FAMOUS WILD ANIMAL TAMER THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN, WHO COMES TO AMERICA TO APPEAR WITH HINDPAUGH'S AGGREGATION OF WORLD-WIDE WONDERS IN HIS UNEQUALED TIGER-TAMING ACTS.

"HILARIO WILL ARRIVE ON THE *OCEANIC*, WHICH DOCKS AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK THIS MORNING.

"EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK SHOULD WITNESS THESE STUPENDOUS AND AMAZING PERFORMANCES OF HILARAO."

The reader should understand that Nick Carter, in pursuance of the plan particularly outlined in his talk with Hindpaugh, had made quick arrangements with the steamship company so that he could appear to arrive in the city at the time mentioned, as if he had indeed come from abroad to keep the engagement with the circus owner as thus announced.

To do this the detective had met the steamship at quarantine, and after presenting a letter to the captain and purser of the ship signed by its New York agents, had been afforded every facility for carrying out the plans he had adopted.

One of the unoccupied suites of rooms was placed at his disposal, and while the huge ship was making its way up to the city from quarantine, Nick Carter busied himself in arranging his disguise and the costume he was to wear when the vessel should dock, and he should go ashore to be received by Adam Hindpaugh.

In this preparation he had merely darkened his skin and adopted a costume that was half Hindu in its character.

The huge silken turban he wore on his head shone and glittered with multitudinous jewels, and his long gold-embroidered coat might well have graced the shoulders of one of the richest maharajahs of India.

When he descended the gang-plank, the first to leave the vessel by that means, he was closely followed by three attendants, who seemed to be of his own nationality, that is to say, Hindus, and who were turbaned and cloaked after very much the same style as his own, although less richly and gaudily.

If you or I might have penetrated these three addi-

tional disguises, we would have recognized Chick and Patsy and Danny, the chauffeur, who had been impressed into this service to render the advent of the so-called tiger-tamer still more in keeping with the announcements that had been made.

As Nick descended, followed by these three supposed servants, Hindpaugh stepped forward and met him at the foot of the gangway, while the crowd that had been permitted upon the pier gazed with considerable wonder upon the spectacle of the multimillionaire Hindpaugh bowing and scraping to one of his employees after a manner that was almost servile.

When the greetings were over Hindpaugh turned and led the way toward the street, and so presently they arrived at the point where the band-wagon and the cages and the open victoria were drawn up awaiting them.

Those who watched the scene noticed that the great Hilario went directly to the cage which contained the royal Bengal tiger, Prince, and, thrusting both hands through the bars thereof, patted and fondled the wild animal, scratching its ears and rubbing its jowls, while he seemed to whisper many words to the creature, which was apparently overjoyed to welcome him.

That done, Hilario returned to the victoria wherein Hindpaugh had already seated himself, and he rode side by side with the circus owner from the dock as far as Washington Square.

At the latter place, however, the procession stopped. Hilario left the victoria, and, with three agile springs, mounted to the top of the tiger's cage, and then, having opened a trap-door hitherto unseen and unnoticed, uttered a command which caused the tiger to leap to the roof of the vehicle beside him.

From the beginning of Fifth Avenue to the entrance to the Garden the procession continued in this manner, with Nick Carter in his character of Hilario seated upon a stool on top of the cage, with the tiger, Prince, crouched beside him, save when the animal occasionally arose, at a word of command from his loved master, to move about the narrow space.

While this strangely assorted procession was making its way from the steamship to the Garden, scores of boys were busily engaged in the crowd that followed it, as well as in the other parts of the city, in distributing handbills, which had been prepared by Adam Hindpaugh, without connivance with Nick Carter, and therefore without his knowledge.

The enterprise, from its perch on the roof of the cage, retained this activity, and finally, by signaling to one of the outsiders, succeeded in procuring one of the hand-bills, which he read with considerable interest and some amusement, and not entirely without annoyance.

Adam Hindpaugh, in preparing these bills, had had in mind only the financial end of the project; he had foreseen that such an announcement as he made there would greatly attract many persons who might otherwise have remained absent from the rest of the performances that week.

In a word the announcement contained a résumé of the events, now a year old, which began with the murder of James Dumont and closed with the tragic death of Millie Slade in the middle ring of the circus.*

But more than that, it recited something of the story that has already been told here about the ghost.

It did it after a manner which could not be harshly criticized, but it nevertheless gave out the impression that there were many people connected with the circus who thoroughly believed that Millie Slade's ghost had come back to haunt it.

It told how, at certain hours of the night, the horses that she used to ride became uneasy, and the tigers which her former husband tamed and with which he had performed, growled and roared and otherwise conducted themselves as if possessed by fear of the supernatural.

But the announcement went still further.

It proclaimed in the closing paragraph that Hilario had formerly been a friend and companion of James Dumont, and therefore of Millie Slade, and that Hilario and the murdered tiger-tamer had studied their professions together; and, last but not least, in capital letters the announcement was made that Hilario had been induced at very great expense to come to America and to appear with Hindpaugh's circus not only as a tiger-tamer of unequaled abilities, but for the express purpose of "laying" the ghost of Millie Slade.

A circus man who knows his business as Hindpaugh knew his, never permits an opportunity to escape him where, by advertisement, he can add to the interest of the public in the show he exhibits.

Hindpaugh had seen in this opportunity suggested by Nick Carter the chance to induce extra thousands who would otherwise not have attended his performance to come and pay their admission fees.

He had, by this clever bit of display and advertising, reminded that public, which would otherwise have forgotten, of the former existence of James Dumont, and of the exciting episodes connected with the yearly engagement of the circus in the City of New York;

*See Nos. 631 and 632 of the NEW CENTRAL WEEKLY.

and when at last Nick Carter sprang from the top of the cage inside the Garden, and motioned to his three supposed servants, who had ridden up-town on the top of the other cage, to follow him, he realized that somewhat unthinkingly he had taken upon himself a much larger contract than he had anticipated.

But he was in for it now most certainly.

He was billed to appear that night at the Garden as "Hilario, the imported tiger-tamer."

CHAPTER V.

MOUMAHD, THE ELEPHANT MAN.

Adam Hindpaugh had correctly speculated upon the possibilities of his advertising methods.

The performance at the circus that afternoon was jammed, and when evening came hundreds of people were turned away from the doors, unable to gain admittance because of the lack of seating capacity.

At both of these performances Nick Carter appeared in his character of Hilario, and although he did nothing which could be regarded as in the least wonderful, his performance with Prince met with decided favor, and, taken all together, his advent into the circus arena seemed to make good all of Hindpaugh's promises for him.

Prince, always docile and sagacious, went through his several stunts with credit to himself and to his master, and the performances passed off favorably—at least as much so as the detective had calculated they would.

For in reality Nick Carter had not speculated upon accomplishing any part of his purpose at these performances, or during them, or because of his connection with them.

On the contrary he had made his association with the circus people, in the character of Hilario, merely a means of becoming one with them, so that he could live among them unsuspected for what he really was, and so have an opportunity to study out the mystery concerning the appearance of the ghost, which otherwise would have been impossible.

It may seem to the reader like a very simple affair to demand the energies and abilities of such a man as Nick Carter: but when you take into consideration the fact that unless the mystery were solved Adam Hindpaugh's season would be an utter failure the importance of his desire may be realized, and the amount of the financial risk brought the case up to one that would have paralleled a bank robbery or even a murder.

From the very start the detective realized that in order to get to the bottom of the affair he must associate with the performers themselves; he must be able to circulate among them after the performances were over, and when their professional duties were not demanding their attention.

The detective from the beginning had strongly suspected a plot of some kind behind all this ghost business, although what it was or what it might portend he could neither imagine nor conjecture.

After the audience had filed from the auditorium at the close of the evening's performance, the supposed Hilario retired to his dressing-room rather fatigued by the exertion of his first day as a tiger-tamer, and determined to utilize that very night in finding out as much as possible about the ghost that haunted the circus and its people.

Our attention has already been called to Moumahd, the elephant-tamer, who alone among them all, seemed to be undisturbed by the apparition, and whose charges were likewise indifferent to the appearance of the ghost.

Moumahd never left his charges very long at a time. He even slept with them in their quarters, always lying in close proximity to a big elephant called Moujik, which watched over him unceasingly, and which showed every sign of displeasure if any person approached too near while Moumahd was sleeping.

That night as Nick went toward his quarters, for he had been assigned to a sleeping-place inside the Garden, he paused near the elephants, and spoke to Moumahd in the Hindustanee tongue.

To Nick's surprise, the Hindu elephant-tamer, after bestowing a malevolent glance upon him, slowly turned his back without answering, thus indicating, for some reason unexplained, that the man was resolved to have nothing to do with his own countryman, as Nick surely appeared to be.

The detective, somewhat puzzled about this conduct on the part of Moumahd, made a second effort to talk with him; but this time the man moved deliberately away from the supposed Hilario and by every gesture of which he was capable indicated that he had no wish for conversation of any kind.

With a shrug of his shoulders the detective passed on to his own quarters, where his three assistants, now acting in the capacity of servants, awaited him.

It will be remembered by those who are conversant with the Nick Carter literature that Chick is always an adept at languages as his chief, and that he speaks Hindustanee quite as well as Nick Carter himself.

"Chick," said the detective, when he had closed the door, "have you particularly noticed any member of the circus company?"

"Not especially," was the reply.

"Have you seen the man Moumahd, the elephant-tamer, at all?"

"Yes; certainly I have."

"Have you spoken to him?"

"Yes," replied Chick. "I have spoken to him, but not with him. The fellow wouldn't answer me. Either he doesn't understand his own lingo, or else he doesn't care to converse with people who do."

"Go out and try it on him again," suggested the detective.

"What's the use? He won't speak to me. I've tried it twice already."

"Nevertheless do it again, and then come back and tell me about it."

Chick, obedient to the suggestion, left the room. He was gone less than quarter of an hour, and was laughing when he returned.

"It's no use, Nick," he said, as he seated himself. "Moumahd will have nothing to do with me."

"Wouldn't he answer you at all?"

"Not a word."

"What did he do?"

"He scowled, turned his back, and moved away."

"Can you suggest any reasons for his actions, Chick?"

"Only one."

"What is that?"

"Well, if I should make a rough guess at it, I would be inclined to the opinion that Moumahd is not at all what he appears to be."

"Eh? What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I don't believe he is any more a Hindu that we are Hindus."

"By Jove, Chick, I shouldn't wonder if you were right about that."

"It's my own idea, Nick, that he doesn't understand a word of Hindustanee, and that he is here in disguise, the same as we are."

The detective turned to Danny.

"I want you to go and find Hindpaugh and tell him to come here as soon as possible. If he has left the building, follow him and bring him here," he said.

Twenty minutes later, when the burly form of Adam Hindpaugh appeared in the doorway, Nick asked him:

"How long has Moumahd been working for you?"

"I engaged him in the middle of the winter just passed," was the reply.

"Did you know anything about him before he came here?"

"Nothing beyond the recommendations that he brought."

"Were they all right?"

"Sure; otherwise I wouldn't have taken him."

"He's supposed to be a Hindu, isn't he?"

"Sure thing, Carter."

"Has he proved himself a fairly good man with the elephants?"

"I can say that I never had a better one."

The detective looked at his watch and said:

"It is almost midnight now, Hindpaugh. Where would we be apt to find Moumahd at this particular time?"

"Oh, he won't be very far from his pets. He's just about getting ready to turn in."

"Very good. I want you to take me to him right now, if you will. I want you to do it with the air of a sudden resolution to make us acquainted; and when you take me into his presence I wish you to introduce us in about these words: 'Moumahd, here is a countryman of yours, and I want you two to be good friends,' and when you have said that much, Hindpaugh, I want you to leave us alone together."

"All right. What's in the wind, Carter?"

"Oh, nothing in particular, only I want to have a direct introduction to Moumahd."

"Do you suspect that he has anything to do with the ghost business?"

"I'm not suspecting anything, Hindpaugh, as yet. I want to know Moumahd."

The detective followed the circus owner from the room, and they traveled half the circuit of the huge building, underneath the main floor of it, before they arrived at the elephants' quarters.

Moumahd was squatted in true Hindu fashion among his half-dozen pets and within ten feet of the spot where the huge elephant Mogjik was standing.

Hindpaugh, energetic as ever, stepped rapidly forward, a few feet in advance of the detective, and did not pause until he was within two yards of the elephant-trainer. Then he spoke quickly:

"Moumahd," he said, "I want to introduce Hilario to you. You two fellows come from the same country and speak the same lingo, and I want you to be good friends. That's all; I'm in a hurry. Good night."

He turned on his heel and left them, and Nick, resplendent in the embroidered coat and jeweled turban

which he had not removed, stood for a moment gazing down upon Moumahd, who made no motion whatever, and who had not indicated by so much as a lifting of the lids of his eyes that he was aware of the presence of any other person near him.

"Well, Moumahd," said Nick, in English, "have you no greeting for me?"

Moumahd raised his eyes slowly at this, and replied in a drawling, rather effeminate voice:

"When you speak the language of America I will converse with you, but I am under a vow for seven years not to speak my native tongue."

"In seven years you will forget it, Moumahd," said Nick, laughing.

"It were better that I should forget it," was the solemn reply.

"Why so?"

"There is a reason, otherwise I would not have taken the vow."

"Perhaps," said Nick, "you have already forgotten it?"

"Perhaps."

"Then it was not because I was Hilario, the tiger-tamer, that you refused to speak to me a moment ago, but it was only because I addressed you in Hindustanee? Is that correct?"

"It is."

"Shall we be friends, Moumahd?"

"No; I have no friends."

Nick, with a shrug of his shoulders, turned toward the huge beast which was near them, and then, with a light laugh, he inquired, still speaking in English:

"Is this your especial pet, Moumahd?"

"Yes," was the laconic reply.

"Is he dangerous?"

"To strangers."

"And is he as fond of you as my tiger is fond of me?"

"Your tiger!" exclaimed Moumahd, with scorn.

Nick paid no attention to this remark, although he perceived by it that Moumahd was thoroughly aware of the fact that if Hilario were indeed a new arrival in the country that morning, he and Prince, the tiger, had never seen each other until that day. The thought set the detective to thinking, and he determined then and there to put a test upon the elephant-trainer which would determine at once whether the man understood the Hindustanee language or not.

He moved a step nearer to Moujik, and reached out a tentative hand toward the huge trunk that was slowly curling toward him; but a sharp cry from Moumahd made him start backward quickly, and he noticed as he did so that the small pig-like eyes of the elephant were glittering ominously, while at the same time the huge trunk of the beast was slowly rearing into the air.

Realizing that he was at the moment in some danger, the detective stepped hastily backward, and as he did so managed to place himself directly behind Moumahd; and then he uttered a cry of warning in Hindustanee, which he had determined to use in applying the test.

It is only one word, although translated into English it is expressive of many.

It sounds, when uttered, as if it were spelled c-u-a-p-t-o-j-a-h-t, and it means, if it were translated by one word, "Beware!" But in reality it means much more than that. It means "Beware, for you are in danger of sudden death; of that sort of sudden death which will murder your soul and prevent you from entering the realms of Nirvannah."

It is a word calculated to startle any Hindu almost out of his five senses, and if uttered loudly and quickly in a voice of affright, into the ear of such a man, will cause him, no matter what his surroundings may be, to start with terror.

Moumahd, however, when Nick Carter uttered the cry sharply in his ear, paid no heed to it whatever.

On the contrary he turned deliberately toward the detective, and, as if he had not heard the word at all, remarked:

"You stepped back out of reach just in time; otherwise Moujik might have hurt you."

CHAPTER VI.

A PLOT INSIDE THE SHOW.

"Moumahd, you're a fraud!" exclaimed the detective on the instant. "You are not even a Hindu, for you do not understand the Hindustanee tongue. You're a fraud of the first water, Moumahd! Now, what else are you?"

The reply of the elephant-tamer was evidently characteristic of the fellow. He started backward from the detective, his eyes blazing, and he made as if to draw some sort of a weapon from his clothing; but instead he shouted out a word of command to the huge beast that stood swaying so near to him.

Nick Carter did not at the moment comprehend what was taking place, and the fact very nearly cost him his life.

The word which the elephant-tamer shouted was uttered

in a language which the detective did not understand, but the consequence of it was that the huge beast charged down upon him at once, darting his trunk forward with all the fierce energy for which that great and awkward beast is proverbial.

Had Nick Carter been less on his guard than he was, his life must have paid the forfeit then and there; even as it was he was swept from his feet by the prehensile trunk, and only for the fact that he happened to be holding an open penknife in his hand at the moment, and that he thought to use it in the only way it could have been used to bring about his release, he must have been dashed to death on the hard floor of the building.

The trunk shot out like a huge finger; it wound itself around the body of the detective and lifted him from the ground, and then, just as his feet lost their hold upon the earth, Nick remembered the open penknife he held in his hand and he struck with it.

It is well known that the trunk is the most tender part of the elephant's body. It is extremely sensitive to pain, particularly near the end of it; and when the blade of the little knife penetrated the tender flesh the elephant for just one instant relaxed its hold upon the body of its intended victim.

It was an instant only, but it was sufficient.

The detective, feeling himself released, sprang away, and, knowing that the now thoroughly enraged beast would pursue instantly, unless restrained, Nick adopted a course which he foresaw must bring about the instant interference of the beast's master.

As he sprang away from the maddened beast he seized upon Moumahd and hurled him toward the elephant, well knowing that it would not injure its master, for elephants, no matter how enraged they may be against others, never forget their masters. Sometimes they kill them, to be sure, but never by accident, or because they happen to be enraged at another person.

Nick seized Moumahd and threw him toward the elephant—threw the man almost beneath the feet of the huge beast, and then, as the animal trumpeted and half-paused in its advance upon the detective, Nick leaped the barrier, sprang directly over the top of the hump of a sleeping dromedary and in three more bounds had reached and passed around the corner of the gallery at that end of the building.

But he did not seek to escape by further flight just then.

He knew that he was for the moment safe from pursuit, and he was curious to observe what Moumahd and the huge beast would do, now that their victim had made good his escape.

So quick had been his own motions that he turned in time to see Moujik stop in its onward rush; and it stopped when its forefeet had already passed over the body of its prostrate master; then its wounded trunk, still bleeding from the jab that the detective had given it with his penknife, descended quickly but accurately, and with the tenderness of a mother lifting a child from the ground it raised Moumahd from the floor of the place and deposited him tenderly upon a heap of straw that was near at hand.

All its own pain was forgotten in the animal's concern for its master.

It acted almost human in its alarm for Moumahd. It seemed to be entirely forgetful of its late rage against the stranger it had been ordered to attack.

But Moumahd was not injured; he was not even unconscious; he had only remained perfectly motionless until the animal should recognize him and, therefore, not injure him; that was all.

The moment the beast picked him up and he knew that Moujik recognized him, he began to talk to it in low tones and still in that language which the detective did not understand, and the identity of which he could not guess.

And the elephant was strangely quieted at once.

It seemed to understand everything that was said to it in that strange tongue which the detective could not fathom—and then, while Moumahd talked to it caressingly he also busied himself in administering to the wound it had received.

He staunched the flow of blood and bound up the wound, all the while whispering to the elephant so that the detective could not hear, even had he been able to understand; and the beast gradually became as quiet and passive as it had been before the detective made his appearance.

Nick, from his place of concealment, watched all this by-play narrowly, for he surmised that it portended something against himself. He began to doubt if he had been wise in permitting Moumahd to see that he was suspected. On the other hand, it was no part of Nick Carter's intention to remain long on that particular case. He wished to bring matters to a focus as soon as possible, for he did not care to remain with the circus in the character of a tiger-tamer any longer than was absolutely necessary.

He remained in his place of concealment a long time watching every move that the elephant-tamer made, and at last saw him recline upon the heap of straw, after quieting all his charges, and act as if he were disposing of himself for the night

The interior of the building was as quiet as it ever is as Nick made his way slowly back to the room where he had left his companions; and not a little to his surprise he discovered that Hindpaugh had returned there to wait for him.

The showman exclaimed, as soon as Nick entered the room:

"Well, Carter, I thought I'd wait for you. I wanted to hear how you and Moumahd made out together."

"You would have done better to have gone straight home about your business, and leave me to my duties," replied the detective, somewhat ungraciously. He did not want Hindpaugh there to interfere with his actions that night.

"Nonsense; I am going in a moment. How did you two chaps pull it off? Eh?"

"Not very well," was the laconic reply.

"He doesn't seem to cotton to you—not so's you could notice it, eh?"

"No."

"What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know."

"Maybe he doesn't want any more of his own countrymen about him?"

"That is about the size of it, I think," replied the detective.

"Did he talk his lingo with you?"

"No."

"Didn't he talk at all?"

"Oh, yes, a little; but not much."

"Humph! That's odd. Well, do you want anything more of me to-night, Carter?"

"Yes. One thing, Adam."

"What is it?"

"I want you to go home—if you have got one to go to. Have you?"

The showman laughed heartily.

"That is one manner of kicking a fellow out of his own place of business," he replied. "Yes, I have got a place to go to, that I call home for want of a better term. I'll go right away, Carter, since you don't want me here; but the fact is I remained here because I had something to tell you which it seems to me you ought to hear. At least I wouldn't forgive myself for not telling you, if anything happened and——"

"What are you talking about, Hindpaugh?" asked the detective, when the showman hesitated.

"Will you step outside with me for a moment?"

"Certainly."

The detective followed the owner of the show into the corridor outside the room, and there Hindpaugh turned and half-whispered:

"The fact is, Carter, I heard something a little while ago that has disturbed me. I thought that possibly you ought to know about it."

"What was it?" asked the detective.

"It happened just before you sent that assistant of yours after me to tell me that you wanted to see me."

"Yes."

"You know, perhaps, that I am always nosing around the place wherever I am showing, to see for myself what is going on? I like to know how the men are doing things, and if there is any undercurrent of feeling anywhere about in the outfit."

"Yes. I understand."

"I am not above listening to any conversation I chance to have an opportunity to overhear, provided I get the idea that it will be beneficial to my show to do so. The fact is, I have quelled many a disturbance in that manner, and—well, I don't believe in eavesdropping as a general thing, but in this business—you understand?"

"Yes."

"Just before you sent for me I had been down among the teamsters; that is, down where they are in the habit of foregathering. See?"

"Yes."

"There were two of the teamsters talking in low tones together, and, oddly enough, they are a pair which I have noticed as being rather companionable with Moumahd, the elephant-trainer. I think, too, that they are about the only people in the outfit to whom he has had more than half a dozen words to say at any time since he has been with us. He isn't a communicative cuss."

"No. I have noticed that," smiled the detective.

"Well, I don't think I would have noticed those fellows at the time if it hadn't been for the fact that I overheard the mention of your name. It was that which brought me to a stop and made me listen."

"And you heard—what?"

"Nothing much; only the fact that you are known here; at least, to them."

"Do you mean that they connect Hilario, the tiger-tamer, with Nick Carter, the detective?"

"Just that."

"Are you positive about it, Hindpaugh?"

"Quite."

"Then it follows, doesn't it, that Moumahd knew who I was all the time when I was talking with him?"

"Sure thing; at least that is the way I see it myself."

"Humph!" said the detective. He was thoughtful for a moment, and then he said: "I don't think, under the circumstances, that the ghost will walk to-night; but it wouldn't surprise me if something else were doing around these quarters, Hindpaugh."

"What, for example?"

"I don't know. I'll tell you a little secret, however. Moumahd has already tried to kill me once to-night. I shouldn't a bit wonder if he tried it again before morning."

CHAPTER VII.

THE MENAGERIE BREAKS LOOSE.

For more than an hour after Nick Carter returned to the room where he had left his three assistants while he talked with Hindpaugh they remained there together smoking and chatting over the events of the day, and it was not until the hour was approaching three o'clock in the morning that the detective decided that probably nothing would be done that night by the plotters against the peace and well-being of the circus outfit.

Usually the so-called manifestations of the ghost were made about two o'clock in the morning or shortly thereafter, and as the hour had passed, and particularly inasmuch as Nick Carter was now satisfied that Moumahd, the elephant-trainer, had identified him as the well-known detective, he felt that at least this night would be permitted to pass without the happening of any particular event.

After saying as much to Chick and Patsy, he directed them to compose themselves to rest for the balance of the night, but announced that before retiring himself he would make one more tour of the place in order to ascertain by his own observation that all was quiet.

In order to understand just what happened thereafter some sort of a description of the interior of the Garden is necessary.

The circus, of course, and the performances that went with it, took place on the main floor of the building, but beneath this strongly-built and cemented floor is a basement of sufficient depth to accommodate not only the animals that go with the menagerie, but the cages on wheels which are intended to house them.

At other seasons of the year the same department of the building is utilized for the stabling of horses, and, as a matter of fact, is as commodious in every respect save one—there is no middle place in it.

In other words, the basement, or cellar, is a circular one, built all the way around the center, from which the earth and rock have not been excavated; that center, of course, supports that part of the auditorium where the three rings are located during a circus performance and where all exhibitions take place during any show that is held at the Garden.

The quarters to which Nick Carter and his companions had been assigned were located directly above the tigers' cages, at the south side of the building.

To enter the basement it was necessary for the detective to traverse the distance of half a city block before arriving at the stairway which would lead him to the basement, and this stairway, which he finally descended, was located at the southeast corner of the structure.

The elephants over which Moumahd had control and care were stationed in the basement at the northwest corner of the building, and therefore the detective had his choice, when he descended the stairs, of approaching the place either by first passing around the east side and then the north side or taking directly opposite that course by traversing first the south side and then the west.

He chose the latter unthinkingly, but doubtless because of a subconscious recollection of the fact that it would take him past the cages where the tigers were confined, and these, as we have already said, were located about half-way of the distance between the western and eastern extremities of the building.

As the detective entered the basement from the stairway the place was almost dark, for along the entire length of that corridor only two lights were shining and both were low-powered incandescent lights, rendered even more dim by their globes of ground glass, which had gathered upon them thick coatings of dust.

Nevertheless there was sufficient light for him to see indistinctly, and he had taken not more than a dozen paces in advancing along the corridor when he stopped suddenly, impressed by the idea that he had caught sight of a figure that glided across the open space from one side of the corridor to the other. The sight of it had been so indistinct that he was not at all certain, but he paused and waited, determined to be in no haste and to let nothing escape him which might be of aid in the project he had in hand.

He withdrew to one side and waited several moments, but, seeing no further sign of human presence in the corridor, he began to advance again, slowly this time, keeping as closely as possible to the cages beside him in order to remain as much in the shadow himself as possible.

In this manner he advanced the entire distance that had separated him between the stairway and the tigers' cages, and here he paused suddenly, astounded by what he saw.

Prince, being a guest of honor, so to speak, had been accorded a cage by himself and the other tigers, those with which Prince had formerly performed under the management of Jim Dumont, occupied two adjoining cages, each of which was separated into compartments by barred partitions.

The thing that Nick Carter discovered as he approached these cages and which caused him so much astonishment, was the fact that the first one of them was empty.

At night, when the tigers were finally disposed of in this particular cage, they were separated by partitions as aforesaid, and as Nick approached two of the animals should have occupied the first compartment and there should have been one tiger in each of the others.

But the cage was empty; the four tigers had disappeared; the doors of the rear of the cages were swinging open, and it was evident at once that some person had wilfully released the animals.

The detective had no doubt then that it was one of those he had noticed when he had first entered the basement, thinking it the figure of a human being who was flitting about.

The second cage had not been disturbed, nor did the tigers that were within show any uneasiness, as should have been the case had they noticed the liberation of the other tigers, or had any person approached near them whose scent they did not recognize.

It must be remembered that a wild animal recognizes a person with whom it comes in contact not by the sense of sight, as we humans do, but by the sense of smell always.

The two facts, then, that the first one of the tiger-cages had not only been opened but was entirely empty, and that the second one still contained its prisoners, which, however, did not show any signs of uneasiness, were sufficiently disquieting; but the additional fact that the third of these cages, which was devoted to the sole occupancy of Prince, was also open, filled the detective with additional surprise.

The door of this latter cage, unlike the others, was in front.

It was swinging widely ajar, and Prince was standing just within the opening, with his head and fore-shoulders protruding into the corridor.

Prince was blinking about him, turning his head from side to side, as if himself amazed that he should be set at liberty at that hour of the night; as if he did not in the least understand it, and was looking about him for an explanation, precisely as a huge pet dog might have done; and instantly Nick decided that the flitting shadow he had seen upon his descent into the basement had not been that of one of the animals, but was the person who had been so busily engaged in setting the tigers at liberty.

It was evident that that person had discovered Nick Carter perhaps at once and while in the act of opening the cage door to liberate Prince after setting the other animals free.

Before moving forward again Nick Carter glanced hastily around him to discover if there was any sign of the escaped animals, but, seeing none, he stepped forward quickly to close the door of Prince's cage.

Prince, however, did not wait for him, but, recognizing the master he loved so well, he sprang from the platform of his cage to the ground and crouched at the feet of the detective, evidencing by every outward sign he was capable of exhibiting the pleasure he felt at seeing Nick Carter there.

It was just at the moment when the Bengal tiger crouched beside Nick Carter on the floor, purring softly, that a wild uproar began far ahead of where they were standing down the corridor and around the turn toward that portion of the basement where the elephants were located.

It began by the loud trumpeting of one of the huge beasts; it was followed by the scream of a horse in pain, and it was instantly taken up by one after another of the animals until it seemed by common consent they had all united in a pandemoniac din at the same instant.

Prince, an instant before the personification of quiet content at the sight of his master, started up, his hair bristling, his eyes fiercely glowing, and as he turned and faced in the direction from which the first sound had come, he, too, tiger-like, uttered that low rumbling roar so menacing in its sound, so penetrating and so terrifying.

Almost at the same instant, or at least so nearly so that it seemed as if everything happened simultaneously, the clatter of horses' hoofs sounded from down the corridor and around the turn ahead of where Nick Carter was standing, there rushed into view three of the circus horses. They were galloping madly forward; one of them was screaming as only a horse can scream when it is in an agony of fright and pain; the tawny figure of one of the smallest of the tigers was clinging

ing to its back; behind it rushed the second horse, and seated astride upon this animal was the ghost-like figure of a woman which answered to the description which Nick Carter had so frequently heard of the apparition of Millie Slade.

Behind this supposed spirit-ridden horse rushed a third, and beyond that two others of the padded-footed tigers loped as if they were themselves frightened by the furore they had created.

Beyond these other animals were rushing, and it seemed on the instant, in the midst of the terrible din they were making, as if every creature in the menagerie had been set at liberty and as if the place must soon become a veritable shambles.

The reader must understand that all this happened during the space of time in which one might count five.

From absolute quiet the basement of the Garden had become a pandemonium.

From utter restfulness, where nothing was stirring, all things were suddenly in motion, and now, as if to add to the excitement and the terror of it all, the shouts of men, the screaming and the chattering of monkeys, the galloping of horses, the trumpeting of elephants, and the thousand and one noises which go with moments of such excitement changed the whole aspect of the place into a condition which it is impossible to describe.

From the instant when Nick Carter first discovered the approaching horses, one with the tiger clinging to its back and another bearing the human figure that blazed with its phosphorescent glow—from the moment when he first saw these things until they were almost upon him not more than two or three seconds could have elapsed.

Nick Carter and the tiger, Prince, were exactly in the middle of the passageway, which was lined by cages on either side.

To the left of where he stood was the open door of Prince's cage, but save for that one opening there was no means of escaping from the onrushing beasts and the horde of animals that were pursuing the horses save to drive ignominiously beneath one of the cages and to wait there until the terrible procession had passed.

Nick uttered a sharp word of command to Prince, hoping that the animal would heed it and return to its cage; but for once Prince declined to obey, or, perhaps, did not hear in the awful din that surrounded them.

As the horse which bore the tiger on its back rushed toward them, Prince leaped into the air as if to add his own weight and fury to the attack; but, to Nick Carter's astonishment, the wild leap of the animal took him clear over the first of the horses, and, just as Nick Carter leaped aside to avoid the danger that threatened him, he saw the huge paws of the pet tiger strike upon the ghost-like figure of the rider of the second horse.

The detective had not been able, during the short space of time that was permitted him, to escape entirely from the path of the approaching animals.

It was the third one of the horses, the riderless one, that struck the detective with its shoulders just as he sought to dive beneath one of the cages, and Nick Carter was hurled head-foremost against the iron tires of one of the wheels, from which he fell stunned and almost insensible to the ground, while the strangely assorted procession rushed on past him and over him.

CHAPTER VII.

MOUMAHD, THE AVENGER.

Perhaps the reader knows that one may be quite thoroughly stunned without being made entirely unconscious; that a person may be rendered for a short period of time incapable of muscular movement, but at the same time retain sufficient mental consciousness to know and to understand what is going on about him.

It was so with Nick Carter in this particular case.

Struck by the shoulder of the galloping horse as it rushed against him, and hurled by that force against the rim of the wheel of one of the cages so that his head received a violent blow, the detective collapsed upon the ground utterly incapable of motion of any kind.

Yet in a dazed sort of way he was conscious of the fact that the animals were rushing past him, and he seemed to dream rather than to realize that almost all of the cages in the menagerie had been opened and their prisoners liberated.

Wild roars came from every direction; the snarling and spitting of the cat tribe, as they fought together, evidenced the fact that more than one combat was going on.

It seemed to Nick Carter as if many minutes must have passed while he was stretched out there beside the wall of the cage incapable of motion and in a position which rendered it remarkable that he was not trampled upon over and over again by the rushing animals. Then the wild trumpeting of the elephants sounded in his ears and he saw as if in a dream the shadowy form of huge beasts approaching him.

An instant later he was conscious of the fact that something soft and prehensile in its character gripped him around the body and he felt himself lifted from the ground and borne onward swaying high in the air with a sickening sensation of dizziness and of the breath being slowly squeezed out of him.

The detective knew that he had been seized and lifted up by one of the elephants; he knew that it was the trunk of one of these animals that had encircled his body, and, even in the dazed state of mind he was in, he had no doubt that he was in the grasp of Moujik and that Moumahd, its trainer, was doubtless near at hand, perhaps riding on the creature's back.

There is an incline plane or driveway at the northeastern extremity of the building, down which animals and vehicles are taken to the basement, and by which exit is obtained at the end of an engagement.

Nick Carter, held tightly in the grasp of the elephant that had lifted him from the ground, realized but little of what was going on, for every fraction of a minute that passed consciousness was deserting him as a result of the pressure of the elephant's trunk around his body.

It seemed to him as if ages of time had elapsed after he was lifted from the ground before he heard the crashing sound of breaking timbers, and this was followed by the cool rush of fresh air into his nostrils, which partly revived him and which would have done so quite had it not been for the strangling pressure that was upon him.

He sensed the fact rather than knew it that in some manner the animal which was bearing him away had made its escape to the street.

He thought he could hear the clanging of street cars; he was certain that the uproar and din created by the liberated and fighting animals had ceased; and then everything became an utter blank and Nick Carter had no recollection of what happened after that until he opened his eyes to discover that he was seated in a bare room, the interior of which he had never seen before and that he was held in captivity by a chain that had been passed around his waist—a chain which he had no difficulty in recognizing as such a one as is used for confining the feet of captive elephants.

These chains are not large, as the reader may remember to have noticed; they are rarely strong enough, save in extreme cases, for what an elephant could snap these chains are strong enough if he tried, but are used for their mental force upon the huge creatures to make them believe that they cannot escape.

This chain, however, was sufficiently strong to hold Nick Carter or a dozen men like him, and it was not that which interested him so much as the fact that he was indeed a prisoner and in a place he had no recollection of ever having seen before.

The room was utterly bare of any kind of furniture; the chain that encircled the detective's waist had been passed through an opening in the floor, from which a board had been ripped loose, and was locked around one of the beams beneath it. One window located far beyond his reach at the other side of the room admitted sufficient light to assure the detective that day was breaking, and he, therefore, guessed that not more than an hour or two had passed since the outbreak at the menagerie.

Through the window, from his position on the floor from which he could not rise because of the chain, he could see the tops of other buildings, and for a time he concentrated his mind on the effort to guess what his location was.

Finding that impossible, he tried to determine how he had been brought to his present predicament.

He went over in detail each thing that had occurred to him as he remembered it.

Try as he might, however, he could not find any explanation to satisfy him of the things that had taken place in the basement of the Garden, resulting in the liberation of so many of the animals, in the wild dash of the three horses upon him, and finally in his own capture by the elephant after which he was borne away to his present captivity.

He asked himself if Moumahd could be behind all this action and if so what the man's object might be.

It was entirely illogical to suppose that Moumahd could have known of the detective's presence in the basement at that particular time and Nick decided, therefore, that the attack had not been made directly upon himself, but had been intended originally only as one of the manifestations of the ghost and as a much wilder and more serious one than usual.

The detective might have used his hands in an effort to liberate himself were it not for the fact that they were tightly bound behind him by a cord which all his great strength was unable to break or even loosen, and after struggling for a time he gave up the effort as useless.

The chain which held him to the beam beneath the floor was so short that he could not rise to his feet, but could only sit there in the position in which he found himself when he awakened to consciousness, with his shoulder against the wall and his feet out-

stretched before him, to await with all the patience he could summon whatever might happen.

Interruption came at last.

It seemed to Nick Carter as though hours and hours had passed since he awoke to consciousness. In reality it was in the middle of the forenoon when the door of the room opened and a person entered whom Nick Carter did not at the moment remember to have seen before. He was tall and slender, dark-skinned and handsome, with black eyes that glowed strangely and fiercely, with a small but perfectly trained mustache shading his upper lip and was dressed after the height of fashion which amounted to almost foppishness. A silk hat was set jauntily upon his head of curling hair, a gold-headed cane was carried in his gloved hands, a heavy watch-chain stretched entirely across the front of his waistcoat, and as he stood before Nick Carter with folded arms and snapping eyes, gazing down upon his prisoner, the smile which parted his lips revealed a perfect set of snow-white teeth.

Nick Carter looked upon the man in amazement.

He had no recollection of ever having seen this individual before, and he waited with some impatience for the stranger to speak, knowing it was much better that the caller should break the silence.

"Well, how do you like your present quarters, Nick Carter? Or do you prefer that I should call you Hilario?" came the question at last.

It was enough. The words themselves were all the explanation that Nick Carter needed regarding the identity of the man who stood before him.

Moumahd, the elephant-trainer, and this dandylike fop, effeminate in everything save the costume he wore, were one and the same.

Moumahd, the turbaned elephant-trainer, the Hindu who could not speak or understand his own language, and this dark-skinned Italian-eyed dandy of foppish manner were identical.

Nick Carter's first impression when he recognized the fact was one of entire amazement.

He did not evidence the fact, however, but replied almost without an appreciable pause:

"I can't say that I like this place very much, Moumahd."

The latter shrugged his shoulders and the smile on his handsome face widened somewhat as he took a jeweled cigarette-case from one of his pockets, and, having abstracted one of them and produced a match-safe and match-box, began to smoke.

"So you have recognized me, have you?" he asked coolly.

"Certainly," replied the detective.

"And have you been conscious long enough to wonder why you are here?"

"Naturally."

"You have not guessed?"

"I haven't really tried to do so."

"It was rather fortunate that you happened to be in the basement when the animals were set at liberty last night," said Moumahd, leaning negligently against the casing of the door by which he had entered. "But you did not come quite soon enough. If you had been fifteen minutes earlier you might have surprised me in my very pleasant and somewhat effective occupation."

"It was your usual ceremony of making the ghost walk," said the detective, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Oh," replied Moumahd, laughing, "the ghost has walked for the last time, Mr. Carter. The ghost ceased to be."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"Then you were playing the part of the ghost all along, were you?"

"I, and others."

"But why have you made me captive? What had I to do with the affair?" asked Nick, interested in the strange manner of this man, who so coolly admitted what he had done.

Moumahd gave another shrug and a light laugh before he replied, and then he said:

"It is rather a long story, Carter, and I don't know that it will particularly interest you. I had a purpose to accomplish and you, because of your activity in former affairs, become a part of that purpose. It is all accomplished now save only a few details, one of which will doubtless interest you."

"And what is that one?" asked the detective.

"It concerns your own fate."

"My fate?" asked Nick, smiling and shrugging in his turn.

"Yes."

"What has that to do with your designs, Moumahd?"

"Listen," said the elephant-trainer, leaving the doorjamb and bending forward toward Nick Carter with his brilliant black eyes glowing fiercely. "When I began this plot of mine, of which you have seen only a small part, I had two objects in view. One of them was the total wrecking of Hinbaugh's circus and menagerie and its utter financial ruin thereby, and the other was a certain kind of vengeance upon you, Nick Carter."

"Vengeance upon me? For what?"

"One of those purposes has been accomplished," continued Moumahd, as if he had not heard the question. "Hindpaugh's show has been utterly wrecked. Many of his most valuable animals are dead and others are wandering about the city or have escaped to the country, where they will ultimately be slaughtered. Many of his best performers have left him, and to-day Hindpaugh's aggregation of world-wide wonders is a thing of the past. It only remains for me now to fulfil my purposes against you, after which my task will be done."

"But why?" asked Nick Carter. "Why do you seek vengeance against me?"

"You shall know in good time," was the enigmatical reply.

CHAPTER IX.

A REMARKABLE CHARACTER.

Nick Carter could account for the conduct of the man who stood so negligently before him in only one manner, and that was that he was mad. There could be no other explanation for his strange demeanor.

"Will you tell me where I am?" he asked him presently.

"Yes; you are in a room at the top of a vacant house located on one of the side streets not far from the Garden."

"But why am I here?"

"Because it was my pleasure to bring you here."

"What do you propose to do with me?"

"Ultimately it is my intention to take your life, although I have not yet determined in just what manner I will do so," was the calm reply.

"But why should you do such a thing as that?"

"Because it is my pleasure to do so."

"But why?"

Moumahd did not immediately reply. He walked across the room to the window before described and stood for a time staring through it; but presently he shrugged his shoulders and, turning about, said:

"Nick Carter, I belong to a race of people who never forgive an injury. You once did me an injury."

"I?" exclaimed Nick. "I did you an injury?"

"It is true that you did it unknowingly—that is, you had no idea of making a life-long enemy of me when you did it, but the fact remains the same, and I will tell you now that at the time, one year ago, when Millie Slade fell from the back of her horse in the middle of the ring in Hindpaugh's circus, I swore the vendetta against you, Nick Carter, and everything that has occurred since, so far as my life is concerned, has been subservient to that one idea, and has been the result of carefully laid plans to carry out my vengeance against you."

"But I do not in the least understand," said the detective. "I don't remember, Moumahd, that I ever saw you until yesterday, either in your character of an elephant-trainer or as you appear now."

The fellow laughed in a low tone, again showing his glistening teeth.

"Nevertheless I was with the circus at that time," he said. "It was my misfortune and my fate that I long ago fell in love with Millie Slade. While she had a husband living, even though she had no affection for him, I was content to adore her from a distance and to stand in some obscure corner whenever she was in the ring giving an exhibition of her marvelous skill; but when her husband, James Dumont, the tiger-tamer, was killed, and when you proved the crime against her, I swore an oath then and there that if harm befell her through your efforts, I would kill you. Then came the second crime, after her escape from the officers who had arrested her, and you know without my recounting it all what occurred after that."

"Yes," said the detective.

"You know how she reappeared at the circus under another name and in disguise at Mademoiselle Maritza; and you know how that infernal tiger, Prince, by leaping upon the horse she was riding around the ring, frightened her so that her heart ceased to beat and she fell dead upon the sawdust."

"Yes; but surely you do not blame me for that?"

"I have told you that I had sworn if harm befell Millie Slade through your efforts I would kill you. Harm did befall her; she died because of your efforts, and I intend to carry out my oath."

"Who and what are you, Moumahd? You are not a Hindu; of that I am certain."

"It makes no difference, Nick Carter, who and what I am. I joined Hindpaugh's circus three years ago as a mere supernumerary who assisted in the care of the animals. I graduated to an assistant's place as elephant-keeper and later, when Moujik, an unruly beast, crippled his former master for life, it was found that I was the only person who could control him. From that time I became the elephant-trainer of the circus. That is all you need to know."

"But——"

"That is all you need to know," repeated Moumahd. "I love only three: I loved Millie Slade from a distance

and with all respect. She is dead, and you, with others, are the cause of it. I swore that you and those others must pay the penalty. I am a Corsican."

"I think you are also mad," said Nick Carter coolly, wondering what the result of such a remark would be and what effect it would have upon the man called Moumahd.

But Moujik's master only laughed.

"Perhaps I am," he said. "I think I went mad when I fell in love with Millie Slade. I used to worship her from a distance. I was only a supposed Hindu then, who helped to feed the animals and to clean their cages. She could not notice me. She did not even see me when I passed her way. She did not know of my existence, and, so far as I know, she died without being aware of it."

"Then, in addition to being mad, you are also a fool."

"Possibly I am both; but at the time of her death I swore that every one who had contributed to her undoing should pay the penalty. Now, as I stand before you, Hindpaugh is practically a ruined man, at least so far as this season is concerned. You are as good as dead, and those assistants of yours, who were there with you last night, ——"

"What of them?" asked Nick quickly.

Moumahd laughed rather harshly.

"Their predicament is no better than yours, Nick Carter. I have not forgotten that two of them were as instrumental as you in bringing about the death of Millie Slade. I will take care of that in good time."

"Where are they now?" asked Nick.

"They are my prisoners."

"Where?"

"That is my affair."

"Are they confined in other rooms in this house?"

"I do not put all my eggs in one basket, Mr. Carter."

"But surely you cannot hold them responsible for what you consider acts of mine," said the detective, with slow emphasis. "They are no more responsible for what they did in that matter than you would have been yesterday for what Adam Hindpaugh might do in the conduct of his show."

"The question of responsibility in this matter will be determined by myself, Nick Carter, and not by others," was the slow reply. "But we will change the subject for the moment. I am not prepared to discuss this one just at present. Possibly you would like to hear what happened at the Garden last night after Moujik and I brought you out of it?"

Nick made no reply and Moumahd continued:

"I knew of the interview between you and Adam Hindpaugh in regard to the supposed ghost of Millie Slade. I was present when it occurred and overheard every word that was uttered between you. I knew of all your plans regarding the arrival of the supposed Hilario in this country. There are two employees with the show who have long been in my pay, and with the assistance of those men I have been enabled to carry out my scheme of playing the ghost, which began, as you are aware, in the middle of the winter."

"I don't see the reason for it all," said Nick.

"Perhaps not. It is not necessary that you should. It was a part of my scheme of vengeance against Hindpaugh. I began by disturbing him. I proceeded by creating dissension, terror, and a sense of insecurity among his performers. I rendered his animals uneasy, quarrelsome, and unsafe in their performances. I have been a thorn in his side ever since the middle of last winter, and I foresaw—nay, I knew that by the time we opened our performance in this city Adam Hindpaugh would send for you to lay the ghost that I had created. That is enough; he did so. The act of doing so brought you directly into my power, where I could spirit you away without myself being considered instrumental in the affair. You know the result."

"Yes, I know it," said Nick.

"Last night, as soon as you left me, after throwing me under the feet of Moujik, and thereby adding to the anger and hatred I already felt against you, I determined to consummate at once the plans I had outlined."

"And you did it," said Nick; "by liberating the animals."

"I did. As soon as the place was quiet I went around the whole circle of that basement from cage to cage, assisted by the two men I have named, opening the doors of the cages and otherwise preparing for the climax when the time for it should come. I had opened almost every cage in the menagerie, and would have tampered with all of them were it not for the fact that just as I finished with the tigers I saw you descending the stairs at the end of the corridor along which I was working."

"You saw me and recognized me at that distance and in that dim light?" asked the detective.

"Yes; and I turned and ran back to my elephants. Perhaps it will please you, Nick Carter, to know that I nearly lost my life in doing so. The four tigers in the last cage I opened followed me. I ran and they kept close to me. I darted among the horses and dodged

around them to my herd of elephants only just in time to escape, and one of the tigers, by leaping upon a horse and attacking it, started the uproar a little sooner than I had anticipated."

"And the ghost!" exclaimed Nick. "I saw Prince leap upon that white figure on horseback."

Moumahd laughed aloud.

"That figure was of wax, arranged for the final and spectacular performance," he said. "It had already been strapped upon the horse by one of my assistants."

"And Prince?" asked the detective.

Moumahd shrugged his shoulders.

"Prince has disappeared," he said.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE POWER OF A MANIAC.

When Moumahd ceased speaking he turned abruptly and without another word and, forgetting to announce his intention, opened the door by which he had entered the room, passed through it and was gone.

He left the detective no opportunity to continue his questioning or to find out further information regarding his assistants and about what had happened at the circus after he was taken away from it in the trunk of the elephant.

We will not dwell upon the condition of mind into which the detective fell when all the remainder of that day passed without another interruption of any kind.

He could hear the roar of traffic from the streets of the city outside the house, but save for that he passed the time in utter silence.

More than once he made an attempt to free himself from the coils of the confining chain that had been placed so securely around his body, but each and every effort was unavailing and without result.

There was nothing in the shape of food or water at hand, and his thirst finally became almost intolerable; he began to wonder if it were a part of the scheme of the Corsican to starve him and to deny him water.

Altogether the condition was about the strangest in which the detective had ever been placed, for it seemed alike to be without reason or logic of any kind. The man was evidently crazy; he had conjured up all those fancied wrongs until, connecting only with animals, he had become almost one himself, in his ferocious desire for revenge for the death of Millie Slade.

The day passed away and night came; and the night followed as the day had done, without an interruption of any sort upon the solitude of the detective.

By the time the first faint evidences of another morning were showing themselves through the window Nick's thirst had assumed proportions which were almost unbearable, and then it was that he heard the sound of approaching steps ascending the stairs.

It was the same light tread he had heard before on the occasion of Moumahd's former visit to the room, and so, when at last the door opened and the elephant-trainer entered, Nick was prepared to see him.

The man entered the room quickly, and in so doing neglected to latch the door behind him, for, although he pushed it shut, it did not latch—a fact which the detective noticed with satisfaction, thinking the while that if he could in some manner induce this man to release him, partially at least, there would be a chance for him to escape.

But the opportunity was to come in a manner quite unexpected; in a manner which Nick Carter could not have guessed.

Moumahd's outward appearance was in no way different from what it had been when the detective last saw him; he was dressed with the same attention to care, with the same foppishness, and with that same effeminate touch that Nick had noticed before.

This time he was even more impressed with it than on that former occasion; but even now he regarded it only as a characteristic; it did not occur to him that it had or could have anything to do with his present dilemma.

"Does your vengeance against me take the form of starvation?" asked the detective bitterly. "Am I to die of thirst and hunger? Is that your form of revenge?"

Moumahd smiled.

"One question at a time, my dear sir," he replied, showing his gleaming teeth. "You are thirsty?"

"Yes."

"And hungry?"

"Just give me a glass of water and I won't say a word about the hunger part of it."

For reply the elephant-trainer produced a flask from one of his pockets.

"This bottle contains a mixture of claret and water," he said, holding it aloft. "I had an idea that possibly it would taste good to you; but, no. I won't give you any just yet. It looks good, doesn't it, Nick Carter?"

He held it aloft, still smiling, and Nick could determine by his attitude that the only idea of the man was to torture him.

"Are you a fiend?" he demanded hardily, for his thirst was very acute.

"Yes; in my desire for vengeance. My thirst is as great as yours—greater; although it takes a widely different form. Perhaps—after a little—I will give you a swallow of this."

Nick was silent.

"Have you no curiosity about your fellows?" asked the trainer presently.

The detective did not reply.

"Don't you wish to know what has become of your three assistants? I told you, did I not, that they also were in my power?"

"Yes. What of them?"

"A little information I will give you; but only a little. They are dead."

"What?" cried Nick, startled in spite of himself; frightened for the moment, notwithstanding the fact that he did not in the least believe what Moumahd had said.

The man leaned forward toward the detective.

"Listen, Nick Carter," he said. "Pay attention to me now. You remember Moujik?"

"The elephant; yes."

"Moujik is a surly beast, but he is as good to his friends as he is dangerous to those he does not like. He has one talent—he will obey me."

Nick was silent.

"You doubtless remember that; no? Don't you recall how quickly he rushed forward to attack you at a word of command from me?"

"That isn't what I wish to hear about, Moumahd," said Nick, speaking thickly, for already his tongue was swollen.

"I know, I know; and you shall hear presently. In fact, that is precisely what I am trying to tell you now, if you did but realize it."

"What is?"

"The fact that I gave one of your men over to the tender mercies of Moujik. Ah, it was beautiful—the manner in which Moujik slaughtered him. You should have seen it."

The man was lying. Nick had no doubt of that in his heart; and yet there was a suggestion of horror in the statement he had made which made Nick shudder in spite of himself.

"Oh! you ever saw a huge beast, an enormous elephant like Moujik, crush the life out of a man by stepping on him? Don't you know that the one thing an elephant realizes better than anything else is its own weight?"

"Yes."

"Ah! So you have found your tongue, have you? Well, if that is the case you can imagine what the fate of the oldest of your three men was, when Moujik placed his huge feet upon the fellow's chest. No?"

There must have been some expression of the horror Nick Carter felt at this statement, upon his features, for the fiend who faced him laughed outright; laughed gleefully; laughed so that the detective was now quite certain that the fellow was a maniac.

The assurance lent an added horror to the position in which Nick Carter was placed.

He was chained there to the floor, in that empty room of an empty house, at the utter mercy of a madman; at the mercy of a man who not only meant to starve him and to make him suffer all the pangs of thirst, but who also intended to lose no opportunity to inflict mental torture while the operation lasted.

But even as the fellow laughed aloud in his maniacal glee, he stopped suddenly and half-turned to listen for the repetition of some sound he had heard beyond the door.

Nick, too, had heard a sound, or fancied that he did so.

He could not have told what it was; it was much too faint for that.

It was not a footfall; it was not a voice; it was not even the sound of heavy breathing, and yet it suggested that more than anything else.

For a moment Moumahd listened, his muscles drawn tense, and with his lips tightened over his teeth as if he were frightened.

Then the smile returned to his handsome features again and he shrugged his shoulders.

"It is my fancy," he said, as if he were speaking to himself, instead of the detective; nevertheless, Nick replied:

"What was it that you call your fancy, Moumahd?"

He asked the question quietly, and in almost a monotone. It had suddenly occurred to him that if the man were indeed mad, he might play upon one of his fancies in some manner, to bring about his own release.

Moumahd laughed again; this time a low, chuckling laugh, and he shrugged his shoulders.

"That sound," he said. "Did you hear it?"

"I fancied there was a sound; yes. What was it?"

"What! You heard it also?" exclaimed Moumahd, in some surprise.

"I thought I did."

"Then—if you heard it—it was not fancy. I wonder—I wonder——"

"What do you wonder?"

"I wonder sometimes if it is really so."

"If what is really so, Moumahd?"

"That sound. That stealthy movement as if something were following along behind me. It is like the pat-pat-pat of padded feet upon a pavement. It is such a sound as one of the animals in the show might make if it were following along on my track. And then—there is the tiger, you know."

"What tiger? What do you mean?"

"You ask what tiger? As if you did not know! The tiger—Prince!"

"What of Prince? What about him, Moumahd?" Nick was asking these questions softly, and in a tone that was calculated to make the elephant-trainer suppose that he was replying to his own thought rather than to a suggestion made by Nick Carter.

"Ah, you do not know; you have not been told. Prince hates me. He hated Millie, too, if you remember about it. Don't you remember?"

"Yes."

"You know how he hated her. That was why he leaped upon her horse at the circus at the time she fell dead from fright. She thought that Prince had got her at last. You know!"

"Yes."

"It is the same with me. You do not know that; or, rather, you did not know it until I told you now. But we were of the same blood, Millie and I. I had not told you that, either, had I? No. Well, you know it now. It will do no harm for you to know it, either, because you are never to leave this room alive. You haven't guessed who I really am, have you?"

"No; only that you are Moumahd."

"Moumahd! Moumahd! That is only a name. It means nothing."

"Then who are you, if you are not Moumahd?"

"I am Moumahd; but I am also something else. I am Millie Slade's avenger; but also I am something more than that. You could not guess, could you?"

"No. Tell me."

"Very well. I will tell you before I kill you, for that is what I came here to do. I am——"

The voice ceased suddenly. A gasp came in the place of the next word that was to be uttered. Moumahd's eyes were turned toward the door, and, looking in that direction also, Nick saw it slowly swing ajar, and then upon the threshold there suddenly showed the huge and beautiful outlines of Prince, the Bengal tiger.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TIGER AS A PROTECTOR.

The effect of the sudden appearance of the tiger upon the scene was twofold; it filled the elephant-trainer with terror unspeakable; it brought joy to the heart of the detective.

True, Prince did not possess hands, and therefore could not unfasten the chains which held Nick Carter a prisoner; but at least the animal was a friend—a tried and trusted friend, and the mere fact of the tiger's presence in the room brought with it a certain sense of security which the detective could not have defined had he tried to do so.

The elephant-trainer was trembling with terror, his knees shaking almost to the point of collapsing; but somehow he managed after a minute to partially recover himself, and, thrusting one hand deeply into a pocket, he half-drew a pistol from its place of concealment.

The tiger, until that moment, had remained motionless upon the threshold, as if it were contemplating the strange scene by which it was confronted; but now, as if it realized exactly what that motion of Moumahd meant, it started forward with a low growl and with that quick, catlike motion which belongs to its tribe.

A single, gliding motion took it across the space that intervened between it and the mad person, and, with one stroke of one of its mighty paws, the pistol, only half-drawn as yet, was sent flying across the room to the opposite side of it.

Then, as Moumahd started back with a loud cry that was almost a scream, and which sounded strangely feminine, the tiger struck with its other paw.

The second blow thus delivered was not a severe one; but, light as it was, it landed on Moumahd's shoulder and sent him reeling backward; and the next instant he was prone upon his back on the floor and the tiger had crouched beside him, resting one huge paw upon his breast, as if satisfied that it had accomplished that much, and reluctant to proceed to further extremities.

It all happened so quickly that Nick scarcely realized it.

He had not thought to call out a word of command to the animal; and now the tiger was crouched there above the prostrate body of its possible victim.

Its expression was neither fierce nor kindly. Nick could not define it, had he tried to do so. The evil

moved slightly, to denote that it was not exactly pleased, but its yellow eyes were blinking toward the detective as if to question him as to what it should do next.

The detective tried to rise, forgetting for the moment that he was chained; and then a low growl from the tiger warned him to keep still.

He tried another tactic. He used his voice, and never yet had Prince failed to obey the sound of it. He did not do so now.

"Prince, come here!" ordered the detective.

For just a moment, so short as to be hardly apparent, the tiger hesitated; then it slowly straightened itself; but before it moved away from the immediate proximity of the fallen elephant-tamer, it turned one glance as if of warning upon him. Then, with a slow, gliding motion, it crossed the space between it and the detective.

But when it crouched again, to permit itself to be fondled by the hand it loved, it kept its yellow eyes fixed upon the prostrate Moumahd, as if to give notice that at the first motion on his part, he would feel the weight of that paw again.

Have you ever seen a cat play with a mouse or a young rat? If so, you will understand precisely the attitude assumed by the tiger at that time.

And all the while Moumahd, as if thoroughly understanding that absolute motionlessness was the only means of salvation, remained perfectly still, moving only his eyes, which indeed he could not avoid doing in order to watch the tiger.

Moumahd's face would undoubtedly have turned to the hue of ashes had it not been for the paint on it, which Nick now noticed for the first time; as it was, great beads of sweat stood out upon the forehead of the elephant-trainer, and his lips were drawn back over his teeth in the throes of abject terror.

The fellow had evidently forgotten the existence of Nick Carter. He remembered only that terrible beast, about which he had just been talking when it appeared: that awful tiger of which he stood in such terror.

Nick pitied the fellow, for he knew him to be mad: but he kept silent for a time while he fondled the glossy coat of the tiger by bending his face forward and rubbing it against the animal's head. His own hands were tied behind him, you must remember.

Presently he began to talk to Prince, at first in Hindustanee, and then in English; and at the sound of what he said, Moumahd made an uneasy motion.

Instantly the tiger was beside him again, looking down upon him with no friendly expression; and Nick, after calling the tiger back to its former place beside him, said:

"Moumahd, I'd advise you not to move. It isn't safe. Prince's paw is rather heavy. But I think it will do no harm if you decide to talk to me—always in a low tone."

There was no reply to this suggestion, and, after a moment, the detective tried again.

"Speak to me, Moumahd," he said. "Use your voice, so that I can determine what the tiger will do. If my hands were free, I could control it; but as they are—well, it is impossible. The tiger realizes that I am your prisoner, and he doesn't like you any the better for that fact. Speak to me."

"What—what—shall—I—say?" was the hesitating response.

The tiger raised its head, uttered a low, almost inaudible growl, and then subsided again.

"Good," said the detective. "Possibly we can accomplish it, after all. Speak again, Moumahd."

"What—shall—I—say?"

This time Prince only blinked the information that he had heard the man on the floor use his voice.

"It will be all right now," said Nick. "You may speak without fear; only don't move, unless I tell you to do so."

"No."

The condition was altogether strange. The chained captive had become transformed into the captor. The man who was helpless a moment ago, was now master of the situation; at least of a part of it. True, he could not free himself, but neither could the man who was free so far as his limbs were concerned, do aught to aid himself.

"You were telling me who you really are," suggested the detective. "You might as well finish what you were saying. We have got to kill time until the tiger is quieted to the point where I can permit you to move. You were just telling me who and what you really were, when Prince interrupted you. Suppose you tell me now."

"I am Millie Slade's sister," came the astounding reply.

"What?" cried the detective. "You are a woman?"

"Yes."

"I might have guessed it. I should have known it."

"But you did not."

"No, I did not; and yet your voice—everything

about you, in fact, suggested it. I wonder now that I did not guess the truth at once. All the other things you told me, then, were——"

"Lies. Yes, all of them."

"But you! An elephant-trainer! How did that come about?"

"I married an elephant-trainer; the one who used to be there with the show. Then I was ill, and they put me away in a place where mad people are confined, and they kept me there. I am not mad, you know; but they pretended that I was, and am."

"I know. Well."

"I made my escape. I hurried to the place where the show was engaged; that was here in New York, a year ago. I sought my husband, and found that he had been hurt, and that he was no longer with Hindpaugh."

"Go on, please."

"It was late when I arrived. The show was half-over. When I learned that my husband was no longer there, I sought my sister, but only to learn that—well, that *she* had killed her husband, had been arrested, had escaped, and was no longer to be found. Then I wandered among the dressing-rooms, and I stood at the performers' entrance when Madam Maritza rode into the ring. Her disguise was good enough, but I saw through it instantly."

"You knew that she was Millie, did you?"

"Yes. I followed her out a little way, and I—I saw it all."

"Saw what?"

"Saw the act, in which she tried to shoot you, and when Prince leaped through the bars of the cage upon her horse and so frightened her to death. I saw it all."

"And then——"

"I don't know what happened after that. I came to my senses lying under a heap of hay in the elephants' quarters, with old Moujik standing guard over me. He always liked me better than any one else, and in that moment it seemed as if he was the only friend I had in the big world."

"Well?"

"My head was queer, Nick Carter. I don't remember much about what I did after that. But I must have had sense enough to know that they would not accept a woman-trainer for an ugly elephant like Moujik. I found a costume somehow, and then I made myself up as Moumahd. I used to do it sometimes when I worked with my husband. I suppose that is why I thought of it."

"Very likely."

"That is all. After that I had only the one idea. You know about that."

"Revenge?"

"Yes. Against you, and against Hindpaugh. I would have carried it all out, too, if Prince had not arrived here when he did."

"Without doubt. And now——"

"Now?" She laughed wildly, so that Prince half-started to his feet and only subsided again at a sharp word of command from the detective. "Now!" she cried again. "Why, now, Prince will do what he has sworn to do. He will kill me and eat me, after a little. Don't you know that tigers never forgive their enemies? Prince hated Millie, and he hates me."

"But he won't hurt you if you do not move."

"He will after you are dead, Nick Carter, and you can't live much longer. You are half-dead now, from starvation and thirst."

It was only too true.

Nick was by now suffering as he had never suffered before, from the pangs of thirst and lack of food.

How to escape from the difficulty, he could not determine. The tiger, although it seemed to realize that the detective was a captive and was therefore incapable of helping himself, had not sufficient intelligence to lend aid in any manner other than by remaining where it was to keep the other enemy at bay.

It could not unfasten the chains. It could not carry a message outside upon the street; it could only lie there where it was and blink its yellow eyes toward the party on the floor who was responsible for the present situation.

"Try moving one of your hands, and see what Prince will do," suggested the detective, at last, in desperation; but the woman in male attire only laughed back at him. She had now recovered her crazy courage again.

"I won't," she retorted. "I will lie here where I am and keep quite still until I see you die by inches; for the tiger cannot help you, and I would not if I could. Ah, Nick Carter, I will be sacrificed myself, but there is some consolation in the fact that even so, you will not escape me. You will yet fall a victim to the vengeance I planned."

CHAPTER XII.

A POLICEMAN TO THE RESCUE.

Nick Carter saw very plainly indeed that unless something could be done to alter conditions, he was literally no better off now than before the tiger came.

save the one fact that he was safe from personal violence on the part of Moumahd—for so he continued to call the woman, neither knowing nor caring what her true name might be.

He realized that so long as the tiger remained quietly crouched upon the floor beside his own fettered person, Moumahd was content to wait and watch; and he remembered that it was fear of the tiger alone that had seemed to influence the mad woman.

"Prince!" he called suddenly.

The animal turned its yellow eyes upon his master and blinked, as if to ask what was desired of it now.

"Rise!" he commanded it, in Hindustanee, for that was the only language the creature had been taught to obey; and instantly the tiger rose to its feet, but still keeping its head turned toward Moumahd, so that no motion of that individual might escape its notice.

"Now, Moumahd," said the detective, addressing the woman on the floor, "I want you to look upon the tiger as it stands here beside me."

"Well? I am looking," was the half-sullen reply.

"You see, do you not, that the animal obeys me?"

"I suppose so. I did not understand what you said to it."

"I spoke in Hindustanee; it is the only language it has been taught to obey."

"Well, what of that?"

"This. The tiger *will* obey everything I order it to do, in that tongue, and——"

"Then why not direct it to unfasten your chains?" was the derisive question.

"It will unfasten them presently, and in a manner that you do not reckon upon, Moumahd."

"Bah! It cannot do it."

"Listen. The door of this room is open, left so by the tiger when it entered the room. It follows that the door which opens upon the street is also ajar, else the animal could not have entered the house. You left them both open in your haste to get to me."

"Well, what of it?"

"After a moment I shall set the tiger upon you. I shall command it to attack you. Then you will scream out in terror and your calls will reach the ears of persons who are passing along the street. They will see the open door; they will know that some person is in trouble inside this house, and they will call assistance and enter. Do you understand? The only trouble about it all is that they will not arrive in time to be of service to you."

"Eh? What is that? What do you mean by that?" was the gasping response to this statement.

"The tiger will have attacked you by that time—and tigers make sudden work of people they attack. I am afraid you will be beyond help by the time they arrive."

"Oh, please!" She was a woman now, all right. "Do not set the tiger upon me. I—— What shall I do to prevent it? Ah, don't do that!"

"Shriek out, then! Call 'Help! help! help!' as loudly as you can. Scream it at the top of your voice."

"But the tiger will attack me if I do that."

"The tiger will attack you if you do *not* do it. Shriek now, at the top of your voice."

It was almost pitiful, that first cry of hers. Nick could barely hear it, half-way across the room. But the second attempt was more successful, and the third was fairly good; and all the time the tiger remained crouched upon its haunches, blinking toward her, but making no motion to advance.

Perceiving this, her courage increased; and, evidently realizing that the detective would do as he had threatened, Moumahd raised her voice by degrees until it rang through the house with all the force that Nick could have asked for.

For a time there was no appreciable result; but at last the heavy tread of feet could be heard ascending the stairs through the empty house, and finally a gruff voice from beyond the door demanded:

"What's the matter in there?"

At the same instant the door was pushed widely ajar, for it had swung partly shut, and the burly form of a uniformed policeman appeared in the opening.

But at the sight that was before him he uttered an exclamation of alarm and started backward again, making as if he would reclose the door and get away; and undoubtedly it was a startling scene to come upon so suddenly, to discover a man chained to the floor with his hands bound behind his back and with a Bengal tiger seated placidly behind him; and to see what appeared to be a second man, lying at full length on the floor a little distance away, and screaming lustily; for even now that the officer had appeared, Moumahd continued to cry out.

The last demand upon her resources had been too great for her, and she had become again a raving maniac.

But Nick Carter called aloud to the officer.

"Come in," he said. "The tiger will not hurt you. Take my word for that."

The policeman opened the door again and peered cautiously inside.

"What does it all mean?" he demanded, still decli-

ning to enter the room. "Who are you, and what is the matter?"

"I am Nick Carter," replied the detective. "Can't you see that I am chained to the floor, officer?"

"Yes. I can see that plainly enough."

"Well, come inside and set me free."

"And get myself nicely chewed up by that beast? Not much."

"The tiger won't hurt you. I'll answer for that. Prince!" he addressed the tiger in the language it understood. "Down, sir. Way down!"

It obeyed. It dropped its head between its paws and kept it there, and presently, after much more urging on the part of the detective, the officer was induced to come forward and to work upon the chains, after first using his knife to cut the cords which bound the detective's wrists.

And presently, stiff and sore because of his long confinement in practically one position, the detective staggered to his feet and managed to stand upright, and the tiger uttered a low purr of approval as he did so, evidently realizing that help had arrived at last.

As soon as Nick was free the policeman lost no time in backing out of the door again, where by now others had gathered as witnesses to the strange scene; and during all that time Moumahd, as we will continue to call the crazed woman, continued to scream and cry out for assistance.

The detective's first act after he was free was to seize upon the bottle of claret and water which Moumahd had brought there, and, after satisfying himself that it was really what it had been said to be, he drained it to the last drop.

Feeling refreshed, he ordered the tiger into a far corner of the room, and then, calling the officer to him again, after reassuring him once more that the tiger would do him no harm, he pointed toward the shrieking woman, and said:

"Officer, that person is a woman. By her own confession she has escaped from some sort of an institution where crazy people are confined. Yesterday, or the day before—I do not know much about time since I have been here—she was known as Moumahd, the elephant-trainer of Hindpaugh's show."

"Gee!" exclaimed the officer. "Then she is the one who set the animals free."

"Yes."

"Well, the woman is crazy. Do you know, Mr. Carter, that more than a dozen wild animals escaped from the menagerie, and that some of them are at liberty yet?"

"No. I know nothing about it. I was brought here and chained as you see. I have been here ever since."

"Who did it, Mr. Carter?"

"Moujik, the big elephant."

"Oh, I know. Well, that elephant is dead. He was killed half an hour ago. Three of the tigers are dead; two of the lions; one of the black leopards. It has been a great time. But I heard about your being carried off by an elephant. Somebody saw it, only they didn't know who you were. And say, Mr. Carter!"

"Well?"

"Those three assistants of yours——"

"Yes, yes, yes! What of them?"

"Well, they are hunting high and low for you. The whole police force of the city are wondering what has become of you, too."

"Then Chick is safe? And Patsy? And Danny?"

"I haven't heard that anything is the matter with them."

"Thank you, officer. Now, if you will go outside and summon a patrol-wagon, I will remain here with the tiger until you return. The tiger is the only one who can prevent Moumahd from doing violence. I wish, by the way, that you would summon two patrols; I will need one for transporting Prince through the city. If there is so much excitement about escaped animals, it would hardly do to let Prince appear on the streets just now."

The story of the laying of the ghost, which was no ghost at all, is told. The ghost part of it, carefully worked out by Millie's sister in her character of Moumahd, had readily affected the superstitious minds of the circus performers; they had been only too willing to believe that the circus was haunted, and because of the resemblance between the sisters, it had been a simple matter for Moumahd to impersonate Millie, when her paint and stain of Moumahd the trainer, was washed off. Then, aided by phosphorescence, the rest was easy.

Bertha Slade, for that was her true name before her marriage, was returned to the asylum from which she had escaped more than a year before; Hindpaugh went abroad for a new stock of animals, and the show went on as if nothing had happened to it. Nevertheless, the escape of the animals, never explained so that the public exactly understood it, was the talk of the town for a time.

THE END.

The next number (1037) will be "The Secret of a Private Room; or, Nick Carter Makes an Experiment."

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DOGS THAT EARN THEIR OWN LIVING.

Hull appears to be the only place in England where dogs are regularly employed to aid the police in tracking criminals. At present Scotland Yard has not recognized the usefulness of the canine in this direction, but the time may come when London will be patrolled by "dog policemen."

The Hull police have discovered that Airedale terriers make the best "canine constables," and this breed of dog is extraordinarily quick at hearing. It has been proved that an Airedale terrier can hear 400 yards farther off than a man, and as a thief-catcher he cannot be beaten. The four-footed watchers to be seen at the Hull Docks have been taught to obey the calls of small trumpets carried by the policemen, whom they accompany when on patrol. As a rule, the dogs are held on leash, and wear a leather muzzle over their heads so that when they have seized their quarry they cannot bite him.

The Hull dogs are exceedingly intelligent, and they have been trained to upset bicycles ridden by "prowlers," to refuse the common or garden sausage, which may be seasoned with strychnin or some other poison, and to recognize a friend from an enemy. They are [illegible] such effective work that other towns are considering whether they will equip themselves with "dog policemen."

The French police forces have employed dogs as detectives for some time. Three trained canines, named Black, [illegible], and Duc respectively, turn out on duty every night in [illegible], a Parisian district haunted by Apaches, or hooligans. The dogs were imported from the Belgian town of [illegible], where "police dogs" have been on duty in the streets for many years, and cost $90 each. A most comfortable [illegible] has been provided for their accommodation, at an outlay of $150. Each dog, when on duty, is in charge of a constable, and the special business of the animals is to capture runaway burglars and Apaches.

The dogs were [illegible] "Canine constables" [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

the animals are supplied with canvas shoes, which cover the feet entirely, and are strapped to the ankles. The shoes were invented by a military officer, and are worn by the dogs to prevent their feet becoming sore on the rough stubble and prairie.

Dogs are doing good work in all parts of the world. People who have visited Mont St. Bernard have probably seen the handsome monument erected to a convent dog named Barry, that saved forty lives. For ten years this canine wandered on the glaciers of the mount, and during that period found forty travelers lying helpless in the snow. Barry was struck by a stone thrown at him by a man, and the blow resulted in his death. The monument erected to his memory is of marble, and bears this inscription: "Barry, the heroic, saved the lives of forty persons, and was killed by the forty-first."

At the present time, a German musician named Buechel, who is giving a "turn" at a variety hall in the fatherland, owns a poodle which, when his master sings in a falsetto voice, follows the notes with sounds of almost identical pitch, singing to some extent a duet with his master.

It might be remembered that a singing dog created a furore among Parisian scientific men a few years ago. This animal, which belonged to Doctor Bennati, could sing the scale perfectly without any assistance from the human voice or a musical instrument.

WAR-VESSELS BUILT ON THE OHIO.

Strange as it may seem, gunboats, ironclads, war-schooners and light-draft monitors were actually constructed and put together on the banks of these rivers, the boat-yards forming veritable hives of activity at such times as the War of 1812, the Mexican War and the greater conflict of 1861-64. Even prior to the War of 1812 war-vessels were built in Pittsburg.

Boat-building is beyond doubt the oldest industry of Pittsburg. At a time when the country swarmed with Indians hundreds of canoes were turned out here, and later, when the Indian trader and trapper came to the "Forks of the Ohio," he built rude flatboats to transport his furs and peltries down the river. Boat-yards were established as early as the Revolutionary War, a large number of barges being constructed in 1777 for army use at a point just above the mouth of Turtle Creek. Boat-building for the United States navy began in this city more than a century ago.

When war with France was imminent as the result of Napoleon's high-handed actions in closing the mouth of the Mississippi to American commerce and travel the galley *President Adams* was built here on May 19, 1798. It carried General Wilkinson, Commander in Chief of the United States army, down the Ohio on June 8 of that year, being built in record time. Shortly after this the keel of a second galley, the *Senator Ross*, was laid out, but the galley boat was not launched until the spring of 1799. As war with France did not occur these vessels did not see any service.

It appears from the accounts of those early days that the chief boat-builders for the navy at this place were Patterson Brothers and James Parkson & Co., both firms having yards at this point. In the year 1804 many brigs, schooners and other vessels were on the stocks of these firms, and in the same year the *Conquest*, a schooner, was launched from the yard of Captain Eliphalet Beebe. It was of 126 tons and was pierced for sixteen guns, so it was quite a formidable craft. It sailed for the West Indies under the command of Captain Kenny and was heavily armed and well supplied with provisions and stores, as the pirates that then infested those waters had already played havoc with Pittsburg outfits and ships. General James O'Hara, grandfather of the late Mrs. Schenley, owned several merchant vessels, one of which fell into the hands of Spanish pirates operating in the Caribbean Sea.

The next great period of war activity was when the Mexican war broke out, when six vessels, two war-steamers and four revenue cutters, were built here. The war-steamer *Michigan* was bark-rigged and the war-steamer *Allegheny* ship-rigged; four others, the *Bib*, *Hunter*, *Walker* and *Jefferson*, were schooner-rigged. It seems strange indeed at this late day to hear of sailing-vessels built and launched in this city, for there is now no craft with spars and rigging turned out in this section.

During the civil war a number of ironclads or gunboats were built here, the *Manhattan*, *Marietta*, *Sandusky* and the *Manayunk*. The iron-clad monitor *Manayunk* measured 225 feet in length, 43 feet beam and drew 12 feet of water. Its burden was 120 tons and had a speed of twelve miles an hour in still water. The *Manayunk* was towed down the Ohio on March 6, 1865, having broke loose from its moorings the night before, but without any mishap, although it floated three miles or more.

Among the unique war-craft fitted out in this port were the rams or ordinary steamboats made iron-clad by plates of boiler-iron and the pilot-house and other parts protected by walls of heavy timbers. These were attached to the flotillas of gunboats on the Mississippi that performed such good service at Vicksburg and other places during the war.

A NEWSPAPER FOR BURGLARS.

This is the age of specialization in journalism, as in other things, the world over. Nearly every trade or profession has its organ. But in the ancient city of Moscow an editor has discovered an entirely new field for newspaper enterprise, which appeals to a numerous clientèle. His paper, which made its first appearance only a little while ago, is called *Bosatska Gazeta*, which, interpreted, means, "The Barefooted Man's Gazette." It is a little weekly journal, consisting of one double sheet of printed matter. It is ostensibly run by thieves and vagabonds for the benefit of thieves and vagabonds.

The bulk of its contents consists of contributions from burglars and other folk who prey upon society, in which they describe their successful exploits. Its tone is humorous and racy. The text is enlivened with comic sketches, some of which are uncommonly well done. Unless the police suppress it, it bids fair to have a prosperous career.

It is not lacking in advertisements, most of them of a decidedly unique character. In one issue, for instance, a young man announces that, "being full of energy and temperament and having a loving heart, he seeks a life partner in the shape of a young lady with small means." The adventurer goes on to say that "having practised housebreaking from his tender years, he is now, at five-and-twenty, as expert a burglar as any in Moscow, and can, therefore, assure his wife comfort and even luxury."

The "office" is situated in the Yamskaia, a shabby second street, opposite a small theater. It is a private flat, and is small dimensions—a room overlooking the courtyard—large enough for the table, chair, and stove which furnish it. The chair is occupied by a shock-headed youth with long black hair, intelligent eyes, and an ardent desire for pencil and stale tobacco. He always runs the editor to rest, and contributors are invited to leave their offerings on the table, where lay an empty matchbox, a tea-stained piece of blotting-paper, and a few cigarette ends. In a week the management of the paper is changed, however. Nobody knows where it is printed, but as all the police who have been on its track since the first number appeared. It comes out once a week, and costs 5 copecks, equivalent to 3 cents.

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